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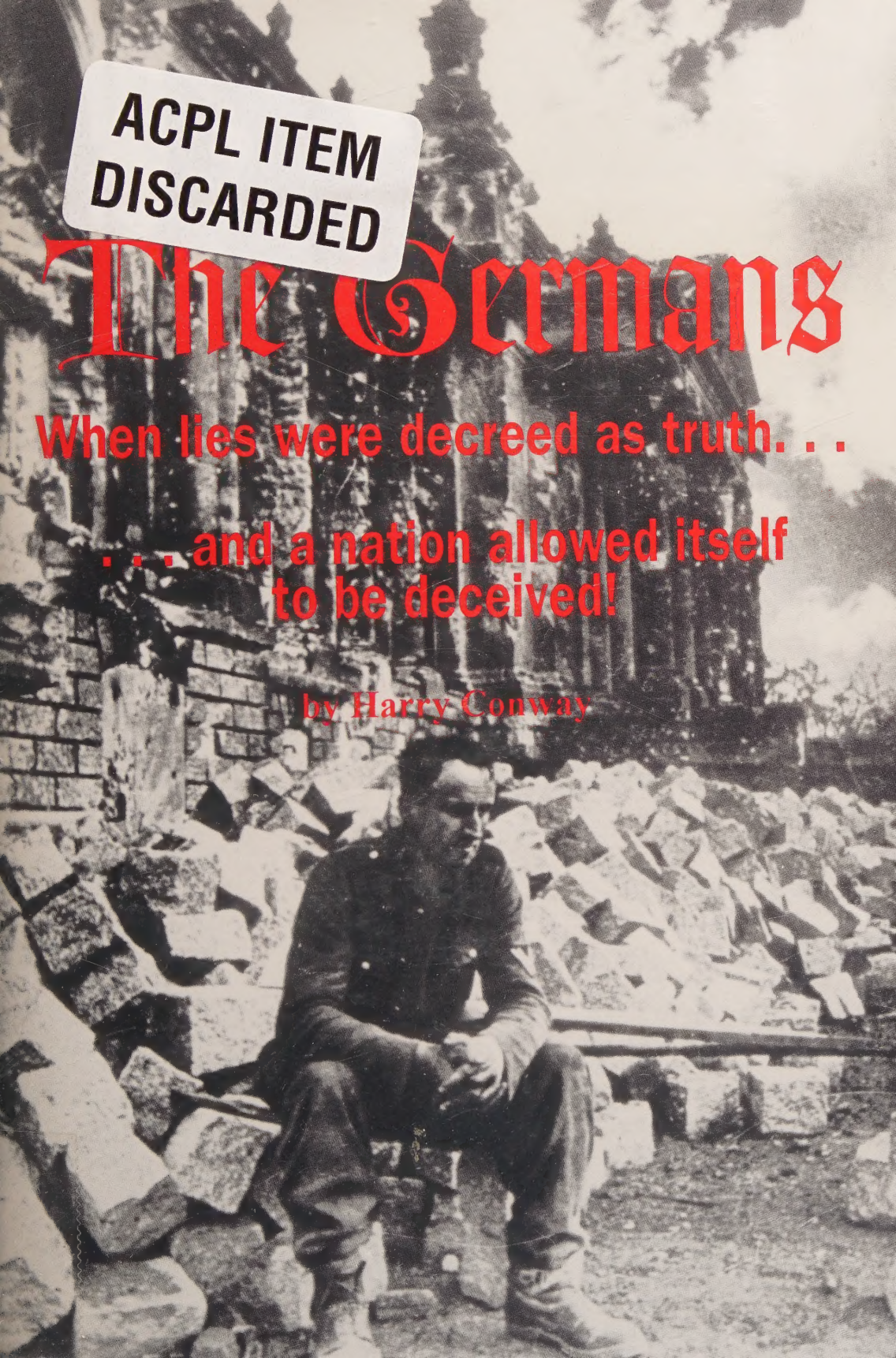
DISCARDED

The Germans

When lies were decreed as truth. . .

. . . and a nation allowed itself to be deceived!

by Harry Conway



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THE GERMANS—

When Lies Were Decreed As Truth...
...and a nation allowed itself to be deceived!

by Harry Conway

In this unusual book the author has woven several distinct but closely inter-related perspectives on a crucial period of the 20th century into a single historic document.

Walking with him through the corridors of his memory, we experience his family's ordeal of living in Hitler's Germany in the 30s. Articulately, the author portrays the Germans as they accommodated themselves to the lies fed to them, averted their eyes from the efforts at stripping all perceived opponents of the regime of their civil rights, possessions, and eventually, their lives in the KZ, the dreaded concentration camps.

He fluidly tells us of the successes of Germany's bloodless expansion, while the Western nations acquiesced to the cheap victories. All went well for the Germans until Hitler succeeded in launching the war he was not willing to forego. Most of Europe was conquered in a striking feat of Blitzkrieg to the delirious approval of the German nation, as yet unaware of how their well being was the result of crass manipulation and deception.

Throughout this, the author and his family go through their own hell, from their last night in Leipzig, the infamous Kristallnacht, to emigration into the unknown and all the anguish that entailed. As the war unfolds, he writes, as counterpoint to their own struggle in exile, from the view of a highly apprehensive youthful observer. He conveys a deep sense of participation, a feeling for the grimness of battle, of the individual soldier's agony, commanders making fateful decisions. Through it all, the men, the weapons, the strategy behind it come alive, the ultimate victory bitter sweet.

In the background, the horror of the systematic extermination of a people which, while becoming known during the war, was nevertheless seriously questioned. Only at the end did the full extent of the horror of six million Jews became clear.

The German nation that had reaped the whirlwind, and it makes for dramatic reading, became aware that the regime they allowed to plunge them into the abyss, was run by thugs given legitimacy by resplendent uniforms and cunningly deceiving speeches.

It is a piece of factual history, exhaustively researched, that ought not to be forgotten by any thoughtful individual. It shaped the 20th century and all of our lives, even that of generations that came after it. Reading this book is a roadmap to past errors, duplicity, and unspeakable brutality, as well as courage in the face of adversity.

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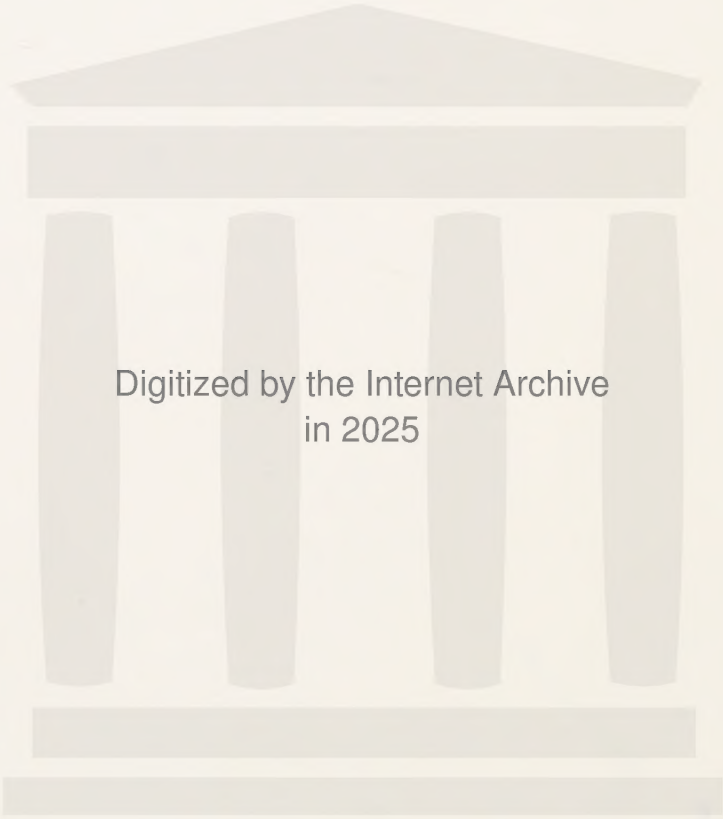
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—A MEMOIR OF OUR CRUCIAL TIME—

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Dedication

I think with sadness of the soldiers, sailors, and airmen of those years, who fought and too often died bravely, each one very much alone, literally to save the world. Their mute white crosses and stars of David dotted across the world in too many military cemeteries are silent reminders. I have seen more of them than I can bear.

I think with pride of my father who ventured everything to save his family but ultimately died before his time as the heavy burden he assumed in those years left their mark.

To them, and to the memory of many millions of hapless, defenseless civilians the world over who were executed, bombed, uprooted, terrorized, persecuted, incarcerated, tortured, starved, experimented with, and ultimately brutally exterminated to satisfy mindless hatred, this book is dedicated.

Acknowledgments

My decision to embark on the difficult enterprise of writing a book started, unconsciously, a long time ago, when I didn't have the time for it, and only the vaguest outline of what it should be. But I always knew, that somehow the event described in the first paragraph would be its opening, would set the scene. It was a milestone, even if I didn't know it then.

I owe it to my wife Brigitte who, after my retirement encouraged me, over my protestations, to get a computer. Not that I was unfamiliar with them. My corporation was one of the first to talk PC's with IBM in the 70s, at a time when there was not even software available. Yet, we had to have them and used them productively, but they were operated by my staff, while I secretly envied them for knowing how. Like most people my age, I was a little afraid of them, but followed my wife's suggestion and bought one. And like everyone else, struggled with it for quite some time.

Over the years it took for this project to take shape, I think she has come to regret urging me. She has often bemoaned her computer widow status. So, I thank her for her patience and forbearance.

Like all new writers, I became discouraged from time to time. Therefore no one has earned my gratitude more than my friend Al Morris of Kennebunkport, Maine. Himself a successful publisher of New England town histories, he shared with me all he knows about the business of writing books. He always said it would be difficult, and he was right. But he also gave me unstinting support and encouragement. He even took time from his busy schedule to review my first effort, some years ago. I learned a lot from him. And I truly thank him for being a friend.

After some false starts, I had the satisfaction of suddenly finding a publisher who actually read what I sent him, said outright that he liked it, could he see more, please. And after he read the full manuscript, we met in New York and had a meeting of the minds. I am thankful to

him for treating me and my work with a measure of respect. "It came," Mr. Sheinbaum said, "from the heart." And I thank him for seeing that.

I grew to have a great deal of respect for my tough-minded lady editor. The book is better for her critical input. I thank her much.

And a word of thanks to Christine Vratny of *STERN* Magazine in New York. Her and her Hamburg colleagues' unstinting, most efficient and cheerful help through countless phone calls, faxes and correspondence in guiding me through the maze of dealing with this major publishing house were invaluable.

I hope the reader will feel as my publisher does.

Preface

This is the story of an entire generation—the one of your parents or grandparents. Or perhaps, if you are old enough, your own. Regardless of nationality, race, or creed, all were caught up in an era of such far-reaching historic significance and cataclysmic consequences that everything that came afterward was shaped by it. To this day world events spring from it. It was an era that cannot, must not, be forgotten, pushed aside, or underestimated, even though it is now almost sixty years behind us.

In reality, several generations all over the world were engulfed by it. Millions of Adolf Hitler's Germans and Austrians consciously and enthusiastically built, supported, and eagerly participated in what they called the Thousand Year Third Reich, but which became the Nazis' twelve-year reign of terror. For them, it seemed like an exhilarating time. After years of confusion, economic hardship, political instability, here was a leader who not only promised, but seemed to deliver. For the people of Germany, he certainly did: jobs, food for their families, huge public works projects, and above all, order, so slavishly cherished in Germany. A renascent pride in their country.

In the process, they were pressed into chic uniforms, told when, where, and how to march, what to think, whom to like and whom to despise, all by a tightly controlled press that lied to them on a gigantic scale. Here was a regime that owed its existence to the big lie. "The bigger the lie," Hitler said, "the more credible it becomes." So, the lies became the decrees that regulated life in Germany down to the minutest detail. In that most carefully orchestrated euphoria, very few noticed what was being done to them. In a relatively short time, the fabric of German society with its renowned culture was changed into total obedience to the state under penalty of death, accompanied by the relentless persecution of the Jewish minority. Hitler and his Nazis had free rein. The police state was in place. And was ruthlessly used to intimidate, to murder, to persecute, to imprison. Concentration camps, instilling fear, appeared everywhere. Nazi acronyms sprouted in the

language: SS, Gestapo, KZ, HJ, BDM, RSHA, NSDAP, NSKK, an endless variation on the theme of a state-ordered society. Hitler deceived the world with his lies. A canny politician, he knew what his people wanted to hear and where his adversaries' weaknesses lay. To the world, he made promises he never kept.

Above all, he deceived his own nation while they, unable or unwilling to look beyond it all, cheered him for it. Then, to their surprise, he catapulted them into the war he had always wanted, and had carefully prepared for.

And with that he shocked the world into a rude awakening. Less than an agonizing decade later Germany reaped a whirlwind of fury and destruction from an aroused world determined to get even, determined to extinguish all that malevolence.

The Germans themselves, and millions elsewhere, suppressed their innermost instincts of right and wrong, looked the other way while horrible deeds were carried out against their fellow man, often before their very eyes. A mere handful of Germans saw early on what was happening, conspired to terminate the evil, failed—and paid with their lives. Several of the world's leading political figures, short sighted about where their duty lay, perfidiously accommodated themselves and their nations to the rising danger of the 1930s, giving entire countries away with the stroke of a pen for the sake of an illusion: *peace in our time*. Lesser politicians and bureaucrats of most nations practiced expediency, crass racial discrimination, or simply that most devastating of human characteristics, indifference. What was happening in Germany did not concern them. Passive and naive observers at first, they soon enough became the victims themselves as terror and destruction caught up with almost every man, woman and child of those years all over the globe. Hitler's successes encouraged Italy to join him. Japan watched from a distance, saw the weakness of the West, and became emboldened to go beyond its adventures in China. It was not until the terrifying mushroom cloud of the atomic age dawned on mankind that the insanity that swept the world and cost over 60 million lives was brought to an end.

But a compilation of history is not the purpose here. This book focuses on one family, uprooted and deeply affected by the trials imposed by events. None of its members were spared the anguish of

those years. Disoriented and after many painful, false starts they eventually found new bearings in unfamiliar worlds and put the pieces of their lives together again, inspired by their extraordinary father. Ultimately they survived the forced flight from their country of birth, to emigrate into the unknown. Only years later did they realize how narrowly they escaped becoming ashes in the wind.

The historical events referred to in this book merely serve as historic milestones in the family's odyssey. Those events are there to give texture and background to the times in which they struggled, after having lived comfortably and purposefully in a civilized country with a long history of enlightened culture, where they had honored their responsibilities, had contributed to their society, and had deemed their existence safe.

This first book is an intensely personal narrative, spanning time from 1931 to the early 1950s. If nothing else, it is for new generations to discover what it was like, hopefully to draw lessons if they can, and above all, to think responsibly on how they might have acted under similar circumstances. For my contemporaries everywhere, it is a time to reflect and remember.

This book has presented its author with a particular problem. How to relate events through the eyes of a young boy barely aware of their causes as he lived through them. Forced to step hastily into adulthood, he missed, as did millions of his contemporaries, that period of innocent childhood that should be part of everyone's life. What few knew then, he certainly knows now, almost six decades later, as the dust of recent history has settled. I have chosen to interweave today's knowledge with yesterday's experiences. There was no foresight then. There is no hindsight now. Only factual events.

H. C.

Middlebury, Vermont—1995

Introduction

I have known for decades that someday, I would write this book. The thought took years to mature. Having retired some time ago from running a corporation, the hectic life was over and the time seemed ideal. But having the time only partially explains my decision. Motivation was uppermost, and clearly I wanted to communicate with mainly a new generation of readers. About the facts. To invent nothing. To make understandable, warts and all, what happened at an incisive moment in history.

That which I wrote about my family is characteristic of many others who went through similar experiences, seldom written about. Because they were able to leave in time, their story was not considered as important as that of the millions that failed to do so. Quite properly so. And yet, what they lived through is worth telling about.

After the war, most of my friends in Germany, all younger, were eager to learn what had happened in the 30s and 40s, the time of their parents, who refused to discuss the issue with them. Nor did their schools teach them then, although they do now. But there were also casual acquaintances who, upon discovering who I was and why I had left Germany, besides offering embarrassing apologies, were quick to enlighten me as to how good I had it for having left just in time, when they had to endure all that terrible bombing!

The period of World War II, simply through the pressures of new events that constantly vie for our attention has, in the public perception, receded to a level of. . . well, *it was such a long time ago!*

Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, of course it was a long time ago. Fifty years ago, to be precise, when it was finally over. Or longer for those who saw its ugly inception, watched apprehensively every moment of it, until the fatal fuse was lit in 1939.

But of the many wars that were fought before in recent history, as an extension of failed diplomacy, none had the all-engulfing effect that WWII had. Politically. Militarily. Socially. Technically. And in human terms.

Our societies we live in today grew out of it. Countries were born

and disappeared because of it. Borders were shifted and millions displaced, creating not only enormous suffering, but social and political upheaval. Empires disappeared. New borders, new nations. New ethnic nationalism and antagonisms heretofore smoldering, erupted into the open.

In America, on the social side of the equation, the many blacks who fought side by side with white soldiers, and discovered they all hurt and bleed alike, eventually gave rise to the civil rights movement. Women, in addition to serving with distinction in the armed services, were desperately needed to make the vast U.S. war production machinery become reality, and came into their own. Rosie the Riveter demanded a different role for herself. That enormous pool of military manpower, that army of civilians then in uniform who performed so well, upon return from the battlefields went to college on that most enlightened piece of legislation, the GI Bill. It transformed American society. Following the end of the war, the American nation enjoyed an unprecedented economic well being. U.S. industrial might, honed during the war, soared and America became the shopping center of the world.

Our Allies across the Atlantic and Pacific, whom America had joined to fight the common enemy were badly hurt, battered, partially destroyed, some diminished by years of occupation, most bankrupt. All of them took years to get back on their feet.

Only the Soviet Union emerged from the war as a strong power. Stronger than it ever was in its history, despite its terrible losses. The Stalin regime wasted not a moment to compete politically with its former allies and before the euphoria of seeing WWII finally over had passed, a new war, the cold war, was imposed on the world. And it had consequences that shaped everyone's life for forty four years, until it collapsed of its own dead weight.

On the other side, the vanquished were prostrate. Germany, its dreams of conquest not only shattered but its own heartland laid waste, was a desperately hungry and bombed-out nation of displaced women and children living in the rubble. They were trying to find each other and their dispersed soldier-fathers, husbands, brothers and sons Hitler's war machine had failed to chew up in its mad endeavors, and who were lucky enough to become prisoners of war.

Eventually, the Germans rebuilt their country from scratch, with a lot of help from another enlightened American initiative, the Marshall plan. In contrast to past practices of harsh revenge imposed by the victors, it gave them the advantage of a brand new infrastructure, that served Germany so well in its economic recovery miracle. And a new democratic system of government that returned the country to the community of nations, and as an economic powerhouse, made it the centerpiece of today's European Union.

Japan, on the other side of the world, also fared well. Equally vanquished, almost as destroyed, it rose from its ashes under the guidance of an American Caesar, who gave it a new direction and a constitution of peace to replace its former deeply militaristic style of government. Today it is one of the world's high-tech powerhouses.

Both nations have worked extremely hard. Both are now democracies that, for four decades, have viewed any return to military power the cold war confrontation wanted to impose on them, with passionate resistance. With America assuming their defense, both have achieved heights of economic well-being for their people that their one-time dictators, who led them to war under that pretext, could not have fathomed.

But in Germany, there is something that will not go away. The terrible deeds of their regime, committed in the nation's name, lay bare for the whole world to see in horror. Despite the progress made, the affluence achieved, the shame of Nazism will last many lifetimes. And some Germans have realized that, in their unvacillating support of the Hitler regime, all stunning early successes notwithstanding, they have been bitterly deceived, used as cannon fodder, by those they applauded. Not only that, but in a final insult, as the country already lay in ruins, Hitler proclaimed "Since the German people were not strong enough to be victorious in our struggle, they deserve to go under." And with it, his cynical "scorched earth" orders to demolish whatever was left during the last weeks of retreat were ruthlessly implemented. Unfortunately, not all feel that way. Preferably, they would like it all to be forgotten, think enough time has gone by, that they are tired of being reminded.

This then is what today's generations, both victors and vanquished, have inherited from WWII. Everything they own, do, say or think is

invisibly colored by the events of 1939 to 1945 and beyond. And will be, for a long time to come.

And that is why I wrote this book.

Just as this was going to press, I came upon an April 1995 issue of the German magazine *STERN*, with an article entitled

Germany: 50 years ago. Vanquished? or Liberated?

In its first of a series of four, designed to coincide with the anniversary of May 8, 1945, when the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany was signed in Reims, France, *STERN* published a gripping selection of pictures that are poignant testimony to the disaster that befell the German nation with the collapse of the Third Reich.

An article, "On the Good Fortune of Losing the War," (© Heinrich Jaenecke/*STERN* Magazine) by a *STERN* contributing editor, laid the foundation for the series. It addressed the very question embodied in its title, with which this book deals also, quite independently, and on a secondary level. Here are some excerpts:

> "It was a lovely day in May, one could see the first traces of green in the trees, the meadows blooming with yellow dandelions, a brilliant blue sky overhead. My memory still holds on to the singing birds rising into the air, while above them, low level fighters, looking for targets were diving like falcons in search of human prey.
>
> We were hiding at the edge of a forest in northern Germany. A group of four or five boys, sixteen, seventeen years old, children soldiers pressed into uniform at the last minute, we had managed to steal ourselves away during the night from a military encampment, where we were supposed to wait for the final battle to turn the tide. The road below us was where the enemy had to come through.
>
> As we lay there in the morning stillness, holding our breath, pulse beating in our throats we heard the jeep approach. Four British troopers, their weapons across their knees. We were fearful they would shoot if they discovered us.

But there was another feeling, too. We sensed that this was *the moment*—the very second of the turning of time, the turning around of all our lives. This jeep with the four enemy soldiers drew the invisible line that now changed everything—that wiped away everything that lay behind us.

A strong sense of liberation arose in us: freedom from fear, from insanity, from lies, from being muzzled, from subservience. The tears rolled down our cheeks while we lay there, motionless, watching the columns following the jeep, rolling north.

One said, as if to himself, "The war is over." Quietly we nodded, although we could not grasp it. The war that had started while we were children, and which still had reached out its claws for us in the end, was really over. I still see before me the yellow and blue wild flowers in the meadow and I could taste the feeling of freedom that overcame us then. It was like a present, and my gratitude for it has never waned.

Each one of us has different memories, even within the same generation. For many Germans—for half? for the majority?—May 1945 meant not liberation but ruinous defeat. The orgy of destruction that Germany imposed on the continent had hit back at Germany with terrible fury. Millions endured the coming of the Red Army as the apocalypse; millions were fleeing, millions more were yet to be driven out from their land and homes.

While the Reich Chancellery in Berlin was already being shelled by Russian artillery, sixty feet below Adolf Hitler still held military conferences—surreal games with nonexistent armies and air forces. In his bunker the Führer, who does not know whether above it is day or night, still believes in a turnaround of events. On April 27 he tells his staff that "The Russian armies are bleeding to death, have lost their strength while crossing the Oder River. . ." Two days later, this paranoid in the bunker realizes it is over. In his last official action, he orders SS General Fegelein, a brother-in-law of Eva Braun, to be

shot in the chancellery garden already under heavy shelling, for trying to steal himself away from it all, like his boss, Heinrich Himmler.

On April 30, around 15:30, the man who set the world in flames and destroyed more lives than any devil before him, killed himself. He took his companion, Eva Braun, with him. An SS detachment brought the corpses up to the garden, and with whatever gasoline was available, drenched the bodies and set them afire. His driver, Erich Kempka, later relates how "with incredulous eyes, we watched the bodies burn. The dark column of smoke rising against the background of the burning Reich capital made for a horrendous scene. Time and again, the unburned remnants had to be drenched in more gasoline. The continuous impact of Russian artillery shells all around us made it appear as if reducing the corpses to ashes would be impossible." Forty-eight hours later, the first Red Army soldiers to penetrate this innermost citadel of the Nazi state stare unbelieving at the half-burned corpses. No one knows with certainty where their remnants finally got to.

Fifty years have passed. Standing over this bloodiest piece of German real estate today are attractive apartment blocks, built by the East German regime in its last years for selected party comrades. On the lawns play children, who know nothing about the final act of the greatest bloodbath in history that took place here half a century ago. There is no trace of the inferno in which the Reich of the swastika went down. But deep underneath the ground, the moldy labyrinth of the bunkers—where insanity once reigned—has been filled with dirt, just like the collective conscience of the entire nation. The thread of memory has been severed.

On May 7, 1945, Gen. Alfred Jodl, the Wehrmacht chief of staff, signed the unconditional surrender of Germany's armed forces in Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's Allied HQ in Reims. It was be effective on May 8, at 2301. With that act, the war had come to an end after five years, eight months, and eight days.

The war that turned Germany into a graveyard of rubble, eradicated the German state and precipitated the Germans as a nation into the deepest crisis of their history.

Those who sighed with relief, for now there would be no more bombs, no one who doubted the final victory would be shot anymore, because now the future began which, despite its oppressiveness, was not so oppressive as the past. Above all, no longer riddled with lies—those who felt that way—and there were certainly many—would never have believed that the Germans would ever forget that May 8, this turning point in their history.

They were wrong. Today, not even a lifetime later, two thirds of all Germans do not know anything about that date When asked about the significance of the 8th of May, 64 percent can either give no answer, or give a wrong one. Nothing documents more succinctly the suppression of memory that has taken place in the nation.

This suppression began in May of 1945, before even the last shot was fired. Those who were part of it all—until then aiding and abetting as well as enjoying the fruits of the regime now collapsing—became the flag carriers of "the new era," whether in the west or in the east. There was no settling of accounts among Germans. No Gauleiter was hanged, no Blockwart got a beating, no field marshal asked to answer for his actions, no matter how many divisions he had sent to their annihilation.

Of course, there were the boards of inquiry, but they were an American invention, and they remained a farce. Even if a well meant farce. One wanted to be civilized, fair, democratic—no blind revenge, please. But who was in the mood for that anyway. Even the "other Germany," the Germany of the resistance and of emigration, feeble and hunted in those twelve years, was exhausted, broken, tired. Only a few were not. Kurt Schumacher, the social democrat who had thundered at the Nazis in the Reichstag, shortly before their taking power, that "National Socialism was nothing more than a permanent ap-

peal to the *Schweinehund* (basest instincts) in man." For that they stuck him into a KZ, beat him into a physical wreck; but despite it all, they were unable to extinguish his spirit.

But in the Bundesrepublik, just as in the DDR, the past was swept under the carpet. The majority of the nation, east and west, quietly drew the bottom line on the evening of May 8: The war was over, it had been a lot of crap, but the other side was not much better, didn't they bomb our cities to rubble? It was time to roll up the sleeves, and start rebuilding.

The debate over the question of who was to blame, well, one left that to the few intellectuals who agonized over it—it's not our thing to worry about. Sure, one had been in the NSDAP, a member of the SA, the SS—so what? One had to. That thing with the Jews was of course pretty nasty, but didn't we pay reparations? Besides, we ourselves didn't have it so good either.

Thus, naval staff judge Filbinger, who as late as March 16, 1945, ordered a sailor in occupied Norway executed, and condemned a lieutenant, in a POW camp, already after the German surrender, for being AWOL, could rise to become a most respected representative of the democratic Bundesrepublik. When it all came out eventually, he never really understood what the fuss was all about. And his friends didn't either. In all earnestness, and without the slightest semblance of shame, he said "I resisted my assignment. Throughout the time of the Third Reich, I not only carried my anti-Nazi feelings within myself, but lived them actively."

There were many thousand Filbingers in postwar Germany. There was no stigma attached to having once been part of it all. And it certainly was no obstacle to a career. Konrad Adenauer made one of the architects of the Nürnberg racial laws a *Staatssekretär* (cabinet staff); a former member of the Nazi propaganda ministry became chancellor, an ex NSDAP member president of the Bundesrepublik.

At official state receptions, one wore one's Nazi decorations (with the swastika removed), and the one time national anthem, to which rousing sounds millions were driven to their death, became the national anthem once again—third stanza, please, as an accommodation to democracy. Full of resignation, Theodor Heuss, the first president of the Bundesrepublik, who wanted a different national anthem, wrote to Konrad Adenauer in 1952, expressing his deep regret and disappointment, that "he had severely underestimated traditionalism and its staying power."

Traditionalism—what an elegant word for the brown garbage inside the heads. It took forty years before another President, Richard von Weizsäcker, dared to call the 8th of May a day of *liberation.* It earned him a storm of protests from the traditionalist's camp.

Another ten years have gone by, and we are still having trouble with May 8. Maybe even more so. Because, in the meantime, we became somebody. No more West Germany, or East Germany. We are now simply Germany. We have no more time for embarrassing recollections. What good are they? Does one really have to know what Zyklon-B was?

Presumably, we are the nation with the world's shortest memory. Anything that happened before one was born is of no concern. We have freed ourselves from the scrapheap of the past. In our heads, we have pressed the delete button. Each generation anew. Dispassionately, we enjoy our wealth and wonder why others occasionally look upon us strangely—wasn't there something, not so long ago?

Have we become a new people? Has Adolf Hitler finally been buried? Have we cleared our consciences? That remains to be seen. As long as coming to terms with our past has been conducted under the aspect of crime and punishment, it had to fail. No one can see clearly under psychological pressure, least of all the truly guilty. Auschwitz will not disappear

from this world, not through "atonement," not through "restitution payment" and certainly not through embarrassing gestures of reconciliation. Auschwitz will be part of us for all times. We have to live with it, as the Jews have to live with it, forever. Redemption can only be achieved by an inner settling of accounts, the lifting of the veil from the past. We must know, not as individuals, but as a nation—what happened—how it happened—why it happened. Not for the sake of guilt and atonement, but for the sake of our self-respect. Hitler did not fall from the sky. The German catastrophe has long and deep roots, and until we do set up a guillotine in our own minds and let a few heads roll, we will not have come clean with ourselves.

Because, until the very last day, this nation, in blind fanaticism, followed a madman to its own destruction—and that was the great, shameful truth of May 8, 1945.

The German myth was shattered like an hollow giant. But it opened the door to the world, to a new feeling of freedom and sobriety. We were nothing special anymore, and didn't want to be, either. We wanted to be like everyone else, we wanted to belong. That was the great longing of May 8, and it was fulfilled, more than we dared to hope.

The defeat of 1945, in its historic dimension, was the greatest upheaval that Germany experienced in its entire history: a legacy that crippled us like slaves under the yoke, was taken from us, a new freedom given instead. The price we paid was exorbitant: a totally demolished country—and the shadow of millions dead. The foundations of the present stand on these ruins and these graves. We should occasionally think about it, as a measure of self protection against new temptations."

I am gratified that these thoughts come from a German writer. Written for Germans. But they might as well be read by non-Germans alike. On both sides of the Atlantic there are more than a handful of forgetful people. Trivializers. Hate mongers who believe anew that

Adolf Hitler was a great man, that new massed throngs of uniformed fanatics with their swastika banners are just what we need today. That the Nazis unfortunately lost the war, and that everything we know today about the horrors they inflicted on the rest of the world is pure propaganda, never happened. And they act out their fanaticism as arsonists, bombers, desecrators of cemeteries, rabble rousers and distributors of despicable hate pamphlets. Yes, and some as elected representatives.

Since 1947 we have a United Nations. And Europe has a NATO. The cold war is over, the Soviet Union has disappeared, and the two superpowers are slowly dismantling their nuclear arsenals. Does all of that make for a safer world? It does not seem that way. The danger spots on the globe have merely changed location, aggressors and victims. Again we are watching a genocide in progress, while diplomats are scurrying about, studying, meetings are called, politicians debate. Aren't we looking the other way, again?

To answer that, I call the reader's attention to Edmund Burke's epigraph on the opening page of Chapter One.

***Leipzig, 1945:* The Fear of the Revenge.** *The calendar on the desk of the Chairman of the City Council of Leipzig shows the date of suicide: Friday, April 13, 1945. Dr. Kurt Lisso, a lawyer by profession, a member of the Nazi Party, took his own life with a cyanide capsule. So did his wife and daughter, Regina, slumped in the leather couch, wearing her Red Cross uniform. Like many privileged Nazis, they saw suicide as the only possible consequence to the defeat of Hitler's Germany. Six days later, American troops found the bodies. Partially visible under Lisso's left elbow is his party membership identity. (In the dust on the desk, to the left, above the cigarettes, the outline of a pistol that someone must have picked up as a souvenir.)*

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE, LIFE MAGAZINE © 1945 TIME INC.

CHAPTER 1

Leipzig

THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING.

—Edmund Burke

The rack on the wall in our long, wide corridor held the daily papers of the week, neatly arranged by day. Anyone in the house could pick up the daily copy of the *Leipziger Neuesten Nachrichten*, but he was expected to put it back in its place when finished. Reading it was encouraged. His brothers Freddie and Robbie, already of school age, did so occasionally. But Harry, the youngest, could not yet reach it.

He was almost five years old, very alert, with regular features, dark-brown eyes, and a shock of wavy black hair. His hair was his mother's pride and she refused to allow it to be cut short whenever she supervised his enforced visit to the local *Friseur*, the barber. He hated the lock that hung down his forehead, but there was little he could do about it, then.

That afternoon, he was alone in the apartment with his mother and Ana, their maid and cook who had been with the family for as long as he could remember, and both were busy in the nearby kitchen. Ana, tall, slender, with her dark hair in a knot at the back of her head, had helped raise all three boys, was an excellent cook and a dedicated quasi member of the family. One of her endearing qualities the boys remembered well was her habit—on special occasions when, quite proper in her black dress with the starched little white lace bonnet on her head and serving the various trays of food during one of the not so infrequent occasions when their father had called with too little advance notice that he would bring an unexpected guest for lunch or din-

ner, thus catching Mother and Ana unprepared, she would, as she bent down to hold the tray for the family members to help themselves, whisper *F.Z.* into their ears. Her own unmistakable code for "*Familie zurückhaltend*" or "Family Hold Back." The boys knew then that there might not be enough food to go around and took small portions. It provided an amusing, conspirational air and of course they judiciously followed her admonition. This she acknowledged with a pleased smile, as their mother feigned not to take notice while making well mannered conversation with the guest.

He had asked his mother, the children called her *Mutti*, to get today's paper down from the rack, and he was now sitting at a corner of the kitchen table poring over it, attempting to decipher the large black letters on its front page. It was a little like his puzzle games and he usually managed quite well but today it was more difficult. He could gradually make out the letters but was unable to pronounce the words he had never heard before.

Mutti came to the rescue. An attractive, well proportioned lady, she had soft, wavy black-brown hair with a pronounced widow's peak framing a pretty, oval face with wide-set brown eyes and a small, aquiline nose. Unfortunately for her, she always needed a handkerchief nearby, usually hidden in her left dress sleeve, to cope with her periodic bouts of sneezing and the sniffles, object of frequent good natured teasing by her sons. She was then a young thirty-three. Patiently she helped him read out the letters, one by one, correcting here and there and then, together, they formed the words: *Japan. . . Manchuria. . . Generalissimo. . . Chiang Kai-shek. . .*

It was December 1931. Unaware, it was his first, tentative peek into politics.

*

Harry usually tagged behind Freddie and Robbie, his role models, observing them, admiring or hating them, but always emulating their antics. He watched them wrestle with each other, sometimes trying to get involved but was usually pushed aside as unworthy of their efforts to be pummeled. Robbie, the middle child, was slim and handsome with large dark, alert eyes. He was three years older than Harry. They

were together a lot, although sometimes Robbie tired of the role of baby-sitter he felt mother had imposed on him. He was a keenly observant, sensitive boy, not much escaped him. He frequently complained that whenever there were chores to do, he was the one who got picked, for Freddie, as he maintained, "was too old" and Harry was "too young." One of Robbie's pet peeves was that Mutti attempted to dress him and Harry as look-alike twins. During their semi-annual shopping forays to Bamberger & Hertz, that quite elegant, multi-storied downtown clothing store, he protested Mutti's selections, alas to no avail. He wanted to be his own man. As a matter of fact, whenever practical Robbie still had to wear Freddie's hand-me-downs, which he outgrew soon enough to pass them on to Harry. If, that is, they still passed muster. They were three active youngsters, and their clothes took quite a beating.

Freddie, six years older, lived in a world far removed from that of his two younger brothers. Already tall, strong, and muscular, he early on showed a sense of humor that never left him. He was not above taking advantage of his size, even if good naturedly and he sometimes teased Harry unmercifully, well aware that he was terribly ticklish. He was a good brother, and like Robbie, very protective. He was about to get into the Schiller Gymnasium, which entitled him to wear a special student's cap from that august school. He was very proud of that cap.

Soon, in the spring of 1933 Harry was about to start his first school year in the 42nd Volkschule, the same elementary school Robbie was already attending. Harry was excited at this prospect and at the same time somewhat anxious. Going to school for the first time was a big step.

They were the Calmanowitz family—Jewish, upper middle class. They were born and lived in Leipzig, a city of approximately 600,000 in central Germany in the province of Saxony. Saxony was the butt of many German jokes about its infamous dialect, but Leipzig was a city of outstanding cultural traditions some eight hundred years old, at one time the home of the musical giant Johann Sebastian Bach. The legendary composer had taught and played the organ at the famous Thomaskirche, a downtown landmark.

Leipzig was also the birthplace of Richard Wagner, that brilliant nineteenth century genius who turned the world of opera and music on its head with his cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung* and several other equally magnificent music dramas. Both Wagner and his work have been the subject of endless emotional and learned debates that continue to this day, regrettably not always divorcing the genius of his music from his otherwise most unattractive, greedy, downright peculiar personality. Unfortunately, Wagner and his music were preempted by the Nazi party as the quintessence of Germany's cultural folklore, embodying those heroic Teutonic myths espoused by the state. Also probably because of his virulent anti-Semitic tracts he wrote. Yet, despite those, several of his operatic star performers were Jewish, not to speak of his favorite conductor Levy, the only one he entrusted with the first performance of *Parsifal*—despite Levy steadfastly and amusedly refusing his constant entreaties to convert. Wagner's sublime work was thus enlisted, upon closer examination quite erroneously, to play a dubious political role never intended by the composer, so much so that his masterful accomplishments became identified with the Nazi regime. All the more so, as the Führer himself publicly and frequently attended performances at Bayreuth, became "uncle" to the Wagner family's grandchildren, causing international repercussions that regrettably, to the detriment of Wagner's work, have persisted to this day in many quarters.

Leipzig was also the book publishing capital of Germany; there were more publishers here than anywhere else in the country, producing eight out of ten German books. Not to forget its excellent old university at the Augustusplatz, famous throughout Europe and the cradle of many German intellectuals and scientists.

Leipzig also had the Gewandhaus, home of its famous symphony orchestra, conducted in the 1930s by Bruno Walter, later to flee the Nazis and emigrate to America where he became conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Since history has a way of repeating itself, that Philharmonic's new conductor in the 1990s, Kurt Masur, also achieved his fame at Leipzig's Gewandhaus. It had its Altes Theater and its Neues Theater, the old and the new, both of considerable reputation. Downtown there was the Alter Markt, the old town market square flanked on three sides by lovely baroque architecture, housing

arcades of fine shops. Nearby stood another one of its landmarks, the Altes Rathaus, the old town hall with its big clock. Whenever his mother took her youngest shopping with her downtown, that is where they inevitably had to cross sooner or later, and Harry knew every corner, every shop, every cobblestone on the square. Dotted throughout the heart of the city were innumerable shops, well frequented coffeehouses with names like Kaffee Felsche, which also produced first rate chocolate confections, much like Swiss Tobler or Lindt today. The two of them would sometimes stop for tea or coffee and always *Himbeersaft*, a raspberry-soda of sorts without the ice cream, and an outrageously large piece of fancy cake he would be allowed to choose from the large selection attractively displayed behind glass vitrines. There were several large department stores such as Althoff and Kaufhaus Brühl, Ury and Held, and excellent restaurants, the most famous of which, while not necessarily the best, was Auerbach's Keller, an impressive, vaulted wine cellar of some repute, thought to be the legendary site of actual scenes from Goethe's *Faust*.

On the more practical side, Leipzig was surrounded by several heavily industrialized suburbs like Chemnitz which after the war, as the Russian zone changed into the GDR, was renamed Karl-Marx Stadt, well known for its I.G. Farben chemical complex *Leunawerke*, producer of synthetic gasoline, and the internationally known *Bunawerke*, which made synthetic rubber. Both of these plants eventually became key elements in the German war effort and would later get the undivided attention of Allied bomber squadrons. [Curiously, the *Leunawerke*'s synthetic gasoline production process, derived from the abundant coal available in Germany, was the result of contractual know-how exchanges in the 1920s between I.G. Farben and Standard Oil, kept under wraps in the U.S. so as not to disturb the profitable marketing of ESSO's vast petroleum dominance. Much valuable synthetics know-how was handed to I.G. Farben thanks to such agreements. It was I.G. Farben however who first developed synthetic rubber it called *Buna* in Germany, obligating it to share this with ESSO. By then the Nazis were in power and while ESSO requested repeatedly that the know-how agreement be honored, the Nazis prevented I.G. from sharing it with its American partners.

Some might deduce therefrom that it was American know-how that

unwittingly gave the Nazi regime one of its primary tools to prepare for and conduct a mechanized, gas-guzzling war they might otherwise, without resources of their own nor access to the Middle East oil fields, never have been able to contemplate. It was not until after Pearl Harbor and the U.S. war effort's thirst for prodigious quantities of gasoline that ESSO finally condescended to retrieving its patent from its vaults, but fortunately it did not become necessary to produce costly synthetic gasoline in the U.S.]

The profile of Leipzig was further enhanced by the almost 300-foot-tall massive granite Memorial of the Nations, the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*, erected 1913 to commemorate the joint Russian-German-British victory over Napoleon October 19, 1813, before the gates of the city. The boys' father had taken them there, and so had their school later on. Harry had never failed to be awed by the overwhelming impression the gigantic memorial made on him.

Leipzig was also the proud location of Europe's then largest railroad station, the *Hauptbahnhof* with twenty-four tracks right in the heart of Leipzig, making the city a major railhead. Every year hundreds of thousands of business visitors flocked to the *Mustermesse*, its annual fall industrial and

The Völkerschlachtdenkmal Memorial. Behind car: Grandfather, "Opa"; in front: son (and uncle) Benny. During the 1920s.

commercial fair of international renown. The city boasted an excellent, large, for its time progressive open-air zoo when such institutions were rare and their parents could not take their three boys often enough. They never failed to be enthralled, while at the same time their father, their *Papi*, subtly taught them to respect the animals, visualize them as living creatures sadly in captivity, with feelings probably similar to our own. And never to tease them as other youngsters did. A lesson well learned for a lifetime.

By the same token the city had the distinction of being the country's fur processing and wholesale fur trade capital on a par with London, Paris, and New York. This was the famous *Brühl* where Europe's fur trade flourished.

And it was here on the *Brühl* that their father pursued his trade as one of many experts in furs and fur processing. Having created an exclusive process for shearing and dyeing a certain breed of lambskin from Argentina in a specific manner that found fashion acclaim in Europe and overseas, he had named it *Bueno Breitschwanz* (Broadtail). It was a great success. As a result, his business operations were heavily export oriented and this was to become of major importance later on. Apprenticed to the fur trade by his father and subsequently by one of his father's friends and business associates, he was to become the youngest man ever to apply to the Leipzig Chamber of Commerce for a license to open his own firm at the age of twenty, needing his father's co-signature, as he was still under age.

Papi was an exceptional man, as the boys discovered more and more as they grew up. Tall, broad-shouldered, probably a few pounds too heavy, he was built exactly like his three brothers, Karl, Sale, and Max, of whom he was the youngest. A handsome man with thinning gray hair, he had a clear, open face, a friendly smile and a graying mustache to hide a scar where his pet Doberman had once accidentally bitten him when he was a young man. Quiet, thoughtful, reserved but amiable, and possessed of a fine intellect, he had a great deal of insight. Unfortunately it failed him as it did many others at the crucial moment posed by the then rising National Socialists. Other than that he demonstrated an uncanny ability to reason logically and fairly. Above all he had a finely developed sense of humor with the instinct of when to apply it, sometimes devastatingly. These were all at-

tributes that were to stand his three boys in good stead as they grew up under his mostly invisible guidance in a cold and brutal world devoid of humor.

Their Papi was also very competent for he was, without the children being aware of it, quite successful as well as popular in his business community. As his sons, now grown men, look back on their life in Leipzig, they are fully aware that their family lived very comfortably. Yet, they were not spoiled, did not always get what they wanted. Harry's childhood dream of an electric train set never materialized. His very own first bicycle did not make its appearance until he was almost thirteen.

The home this five-year-old was born into in February 1927 on König Johannstrasse No. 1 was, as he recalls dimly, a large corner apartment with bay windows and many rooms. It was from here that the three boys witnessed for the first time events that would cast long shadows over all their lives.

*

CHAPTER 2

Background To Terror

The years leading up to 1933 were tumultuous in German politics. We children overheard many conversations among adults, friends, and family that frequently gathered in our home for special occasions. I did not understand much of what they talked about. There was frequent, respectful talk about the revered old Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, hero of the battle of Tannenberg in the First World War, and president of the Weimar Republic from 1925 to 1933. Among the many names that cropped up, the most debated was that of Adolf Hitler. It was clear that this Hitler was not well liked by anyone in our home. But on the street two stories below us, things seemed to be different. And that apparently worried the adults.

Groups of rowdies in black boots and brown shirts were frequently seen engaging in bloody street brawls. They careened down the roads in open trucks, throwing out leaflets, or marched down the streets in jack-booted columns, loudly singing the Horst Wessel song and others, including one that gaily proclaimed "When Jewish blood drips off the dagger, things go twice as well." They carried red flags with a white, circular center on which was displayed a black crosslike design, the *Hakenkreuz* or swastika. As time went on, one saw more and more of these flags hanging from buildings and balconies, and I already knew that these were the Nazis, and their flag the symbol of the Nazi party. These were Adolf Hitler's men. Although there was always an atmosphere of tension whenever they appeared, most people in the streets seemed to watch and applaud. Others ducked into the nearest doorway. I did not understand exactly what was going on.

The Nazi gangs became ever more numerous and violent, and they went unpunished no matter what terror they unleashed in the streets upon all those they perceived as their enemies. So much so that the popular but usually stern German *Schupo*, the *Schutzpolizei* or police, stood by idly while the brownshirts, usually in the majority,

beat their victims bloody. The Weimar Republic was tottering.

Conceived as Germany's first true democracy after Kaiser Wilhelm II fled to the Netherlands at the end of World War I, it had far too many parties and splinter groups ever to achieve consensus; it became paralyzed and wide open to the ever growing strength of Hitler's National Socialist Worker's Party, the NSDAP or Nazis, whose sole aim was to control the government. They seemed the only ones with a plan. By bully tactics, assassinations, overt anti-Semitism always popular, temporary interparty deals that lasted only as long as useful to the Nazis, increasingly ample funding from Germany's industrial barons in exchange for assurances of rearming and enlarging the pitiful Reichswehr (the army limited to 100,000 men allowed by the Treaty of Versailles), the Nazis eventually succeeded in gaining a popular majority.

After a number of cleverly executed plots, coups, and political maneuvers in the highly volatile atmosphere of several successive but too fragmented-to-govern Weimar Republic governments, there followed one plebiscite after another. Throughout these, to the Nazis' delight, their two major enemies who together could easily have defeated them, the communists and social democrats, pettily and disastrously failed to join forces. On January 30, 1933, this man Hitler, head of the Nazi Party, was *legally* elected Chancellor of Germany.

Within hours, a well prepared Nazi machinery of terror was in place and thousands of anti-Nazis just disappeared. The brownshirts, the *S.A.*, *Sturmabteilung* (shock-troops), were soon evident by the hundreds of thousands, not only omnipotent and everywhere, but armed as well. But not for long. As early as 1934, their usefulness ended, and to pacify the military who cast a weary eye on the million or more armed thugs of the SA, far exceeding their own numbers, Hitler eliminated their chief, his long-time friend and supporter Ernest Roehm, and his hard-to-control bully boys. Instead, an elegantly uniformed, black-clad elite force took their place. The SS, the *Schutzstaffel*, a death-head and two lightnings in the shape of SS for its symbols, became Adolf Hitler's personal body guard—and soon much more.

Hitler was now "Der Führer," and the German nation was delirious. Round, quarter-sized swastika insignia appeared on most

suit lapels or tie-clasps, denoting party membership. The round ones were very soon followed by a plethora of other swastika insignia in all manner of shapes, as every group, every activity, every profession became organized and had its own red-white-black pin. They yelled thunderously and gave the Nazi salute, the outstretched arm shooting up in the air accompanied by a loud "*Heil Hitler.*" Almost overnight it became the obligatory greeting. Entering a grocery store or bakery without it would invite a furious dressing down from the little woman behind the counter.

Thousands of outstretched arms are raised in the Heil Hitler salute during a 1939 demonstr tion in Berlin. Until the very end, the German nation demonstrated a mixture of loyalty to t regime, a will to endure, blind obedience and just plain conformation.

As a matter of fact, of the average German in the street, the women were often the most vociferous. As the regime—male-driven as befits its period—tightened its iron grip in the years to follow and the legions of smartly marching men in all manner of Nazi uniforms became commonplace, the adoring crowds of wildly screaming and cheering spectators were predominantly women. From the brown and white uniformed *BDM*-teens to the *NSF*, for the more mature. If one observes German newsreels of that period, one will be struck by the almost hypnotized adoration bestowed upon the Nazi leader by the women, many with handkerchiefs wiping their tears of emotion as the Führer's Mercedes whizzed by in seconds, for which moment they had waited anxiously in a huge crowd for hours. As we now know, the German women eagerly volunteered by the thousands to have babies for the Führer within Heinrich Himmler's infamous *Lebensborn* project. Here, in attractive resortlike surroundings and well appointed country homes and estates (confiscated from their former owners, mostly Jewish, as "enemies" of the regime conveniently forced to vacate the scene by internment at KZ like Dachau), the SS carefully engineered and supervised a vast baby breeding program. Blond young women, proud to have been so selected, were joyously paired for a few days with chosen specimens of *HJ* (Hitler-Jugend) or SS, each one fulfilling Himmler's closely prescribed "German racial characteristic," for the sole purpose of producing children out of wedlock for the state. Once pregnant, the girls were well looked after until birth, returning to their normal lives afterward, while their offspring, literally their gift to the Führer, were suitably raised in Himmler's institutions by SS women and ultimately trained in special schools.

While the men marched in SA and SS formations, built *Autobahnen* and the Siegfried Line in compulsory, paramilitary *Arbeitsdienst* (Labor Service) legions, trained for combat in the renascent *Wehrmacht*, learned to fly gliders as forerunners to the *Luftwaffe*'s Me-109's, the German woman eagerly played an equally active role. They supported the regime by enlisting in a number of smartly uniformed party organizations, the *BDM* (*Bund Deutscher Mädchen*), the female equivalent to the men's *HJ* (Hitler Youth), and the *NS Frauenschaft* (Women's League) for the more mature, all the while competing to have large families for the Führer, rewarded with a

bronze, silver or gold "Mother's Cross" for four, six or eight or more children respectively. They also served as snoops, checking up on what their neighbors said or read, or even ate, the movies they frequented, the guests they received, whether a swastika banner was suitably displayed from their window, whether their children were in the *HJ* or *BDM*, how they conducted themselves in private and in public. It became a voluntary and passionate duty of the German woman. These snooping activities frequently resulted in the officially encouraged, particularly despicable Nazi-Germany trait of denouncing any perceived antistate activities (any of the above) to the authorities, with often disastrous consequences for the hapless victims.

The mass hysteria mysteriously exerted by the Führer on the women in particular has, years after the war ended, led to numerous psychological studies both German and Anglo-American, which concluded that the man with the wild forelock and little mustache elicited in the German woman a sexual adoration, a longing to be close to him, with fantasies of having babies sired by him. This devotion to the regime that visited unspeakable horrors upon its enemies only to get paid back tenfold, did not fail to produce its share of female concentration camp guards every bit as depraved and brutal as their male counterparts. Ilse Koch, wife of the Kommandant of KZ Buchenwald, when captured, gained grisly notoriety for having been found with lampshades and other artifacts fashioned for her from tattooed inmate's skins. She was not unique. Again, witness the wartime newsreels and official film reportage by camera teams entering Bergen Belsen and other concentration camps upon their liberation by Allied troops in 1945.

On those evenings in 1933 and on many that followed, I slowly began to acquire a rudimentary education in politics. It was certainly clear to me by now that what was happening was very bad. For now, when uncles, aunts, and friends gathered to discuss daily events among themselves, they did so in low, tense voices. Their concerns must have been justified, for twenty-eight days later on February 27, the German Parliament building in Berlin, the Reichstag, went up in flames under very suspicious circumstances. This gave Hermann Göring, then Prussia's newly appointed chief of police, a pretext to unleash another manhunt for any and all suspected Social Democrats

and Communists who were loudly accused of having started the fire. Hitler used the opportunity to close Parliament, outlaw all parties other than his National Socialists and rule by decree, giving Göring a free hand to institute a reign of terror against all perceived enemies of the new regime. A hapless Dutch man called van der Lubbe, a one time mental patient, was put on a show trial and found guilty. How a single individual was to have set fire to a giant masonry structure as big as a city block going up in flames all at once was never explained. But already then, it was unhealthy to ask such questions openly. Göring was to boast years later of having engineered this fateful act of arson himself!

*

The next shock came on Freddie's twelfth birthday, April 1, 1933.

Early that morning as we rose, hoping for a wonderful party that day, there was already a nervousness in the air. Father and Mother were tensely watching from behind the curtains at the bay window that looked down on the intersection of König Johannstrasse. They motioned us silently to join them. There were brown-shirted S.A. (*Sturmabteilung*) stormtroopers everywhere. But just at the opposite corner, in front of the housewares store belonging to an elderly widow we knew, stood a group of loudly bellowing Nazis. Now that they were in power and had unrestricted access to state funds, their brown uniforms were much newer looking and better fitting than months earlier. They were busy painting a large star of David and pasting printed posters across the glass of the widow's storefront and door, proclaiming in fat lettering "Jewish Store" and "Germans, don't buy from the Jew." As we watched in disbelief, they proceeded to paint slogans on the dark building's walls with whitewash: "Dirty Jew. . . Jewish pig. . ." over and over again. When finished, most took off in a truck, leaving two posted in front of the store to prevent customers from entering.

A crowd had gathered and was watching silently. Several applauded every time a customer was frightened away from entering the store. Suddenly the widow, a small, frail, elderly figure in a black smock, appeared from inside, planted herself squarely between the two heavyset *S.A.* men now flanking her, determined to prevent them from scaring her customers away. Taken aback by the old women's

challenge, they undertook nothing at first. She succeeded several times in escorting customers inside while they fumed. But not for long. They soon regained their sense of malevolent purpose and began beating the frail old lady. A few blows, and she was writhing on the sidewalk, bleeding and was now being kicked brutally by the jackbooted bullies. We could not bear to watch anymore. Silently we all sat down, ostensibly for breakfast. Nobody ate. Freddie's birthday was forgotten. No one saw the widow ever again. A short time later the store bore a new, non-Jewish owner's name.

The nationwide Boycott of Jewish Businesses, as it was righteously referred to in the newspapers, had been called by Propaganda Minister Dr. Josef Goebbels and Gauleiter Julius Streicher from Nürnberg, publisher of that notorious, pornographic smut-sheet *Der Stürmer*, viciously anti-Semitic. The Boycott was to last all day. In our memories it was engraved forever.

Sonder-Nummer

Der Stürmer

Preis 20 Pfen

...ches Wochenblatt zum Kampfe um die Wahrheit

HERAUSGEBER: JULIUS STREICHER

Sondernummer 8

Nürnberg, im Januar 1938

16. Jahr 1938

Die Juden sind unser Unglück

Todesstrafe für Rassenschänder

Das Verbrechen wider das Blut

Front page of Der Stürmer, Germany's most vicious anti-Semitic weekly, published by Julius Streicher, Gauleiter of Nürnberg. Headline: The Jews are our disaster! The death penalty for racial defilement. (intercourse between Jews and Aryans). The crime against the blood. . . .

CHAPTER 3

A People Swept By A Torrent of Poison

That spring of 1933, as required upon completion of my sixth birthday, I went to school for the first time, a big event in any six-year-old's life. By tradition I was presented with a so-called *Zuckertüte*, a large prettily-decorated cardboard cone filled with sweets, candy, colored crayons, and pencils to "sweeten the difficult day" ahead. The usual traditional photo was taken and stood later with many others on Mother's grand piano. It was a milestone. Mother took me to school, talking to me in soothing tones, introduced herself and me to my class teacher and had to leave me there, promising to pick me up later. Not an easy parting.

I was really on my own now. However, meeting the teacher and my classmates, sitting in a classroom for the first time on a real schoolbench was exciting with my *Zuckertüte* on my lap, eventually sharing and trading some of its contents with those of my classmates. The day went by rapidly but I was glad to see Mutti waiting for me outside to take me home while I bubbled over with the events of my first day in school.

Eventually we began learning in earnest, and I discovered that I was well ahead of most of the others. I already knew letters and could read a little. Since Robbie attended the same school, we two left home together in the early morning with our book backpacks and lunch boxes, trooped to school and back home in the afternoon. We now had a relationship and shared experiences, I was no longer just the little kid brother, and it was a good feeling. It was the beginning of an exceptionally close relationship between us that was to last our entire lives.

That year we moved. The new apartment, again in a corner building, two stories up, was not only large but airy and bright. It had a large, covered balcony off Father and Mother's bedroom and the building had an elevator, an elegant and rare touch. Springerstrasse

No. 16 was in Gohlis, a fine residential area, much nicer than that of our former home, very close to a huge park, the Rosental in which we would soon take long walks with our parents, often feeding the ducks in the large pond or the squirrels in the woods. Also we now lived only a few minutes away from Uncles Karl and Sale down the Gohliserstrasse, a broad, linden-tree-lined avenue flanked by large apartment buildings no more than five stories high. And Grossmama, grandmother, Father's mother whom we revered, lived a ten-minute walk away at the Nordplatz.

The streetcar line No. 16 ran down the middle, with the stop being a block away, so we had excellent transportation. There were only a few neighborhood stores such as the Hirsch Apotheke, a pharmacy, a lady's hair-salon, a dairy store, and a few others, while the grocery market of Schade & Füllgrabe was two blocks away. Mother and Ana did almost daily shopping at Fritz Duderstedt's fresh fruit and vegetables stand on the corner of Gohliser and Montbêstrasse almost next to the dairy shop, and we were often sent as surrogates. Fritz, a huge, friendly man with enormous hands always had a pleasant greeting for us and he and his wife took great pains to fill the shopping list we had been handed. He even had bananas sometimes, a real treat in those days.

A mere five minute walk away what was to become our favorite movie theater, the Planetarium, so called because it was also equipped with one of those early Zeiss machines that, on special days, would project the night sky onto the curved ceiling awakening my interest in the stars and planets. It was just like the Hayden Planetarium in New York I was to frequent often so many years later.

Very quickly we grew fond of our new home. At first we three boys shared one room, but soon Freddie had his own while Robbie and I shared another. All of our furniture and belongings had been moved across town from König Johannstrasse in big trucks, and the movers gleefully appreciated the elevator, although the very large pieces of furniture had been taken apart into sections to be reassembled. Moving day was an exciting experience, and we rushed home from school to help, although it was mostly over by then. The dining room with its imposing black oak table that could be pulled out selectively to seat sixteen was huge and just right for Mother's enter-

taining, as most family parties and holiday dinners took place in our home. Adjoining it was the music salon, a very elegant room dominated by a huge, highly polished grand piano partially covered with a large, white silk embroidered throw cover with enormously long fringes. Mother could do quite well on that piano but never often enough to please us. There was a pretty, highly polished, tall, boxlike piece of furniture. It was the gramophone on which fragile records could be played as long as one wound it up each time and changed a little steel needle on the tone arm. We were not allowed to touch it. But we joined Papi and Mutti when they listened sometimes to some of his favorite recordings by the fine tenor Richard Tauber, especially from Franz Lehar's operettas. There was that sad Volga song from *Land des Lächelns* ("Land of Smiles"), and *Dein ist mein ganzes Herz* ("Yours is my heart alone"). How vividly albeit sadly I remember those moments when I hear them today. For me, they briefly bridge sixty turbulent years as if they had never happened.

Adjoining the music room was the *Herrenzimmer* or gentlemen's smoking parlor. It was a large, comfortable room with a giant curved couch covered in a very dark fabric with a muted, green design and matching round dark oak table in one corner of the room, a matching heavy oak secretary or work desk in another, together with an imposing oak and leather chair. Facing the desk two huge, comfortable grandfather chairs covered in the same fabric flanked a low smoking table holding ashtrays, matches, cigar box, and cigartip cutter, a box for cigarettes, a table lamp with a bronze figurine of a juggler throwing balls into the air (the balls were suspended at the ends of the two strings that turned the pretty lamp on and off), and other related paraphernalia. Linking it all together was a massive matching black oak bookcase full of books visible behind a wide door with cut crystal panels. It was all very impressive, typical of its day, and the room must have been truly large to accommodate comfortably all the heavy pieces it contained plus a goodly number of people, of whom ten could find comfortable seating. It became everyone's favorite room, although it was really Father's room. That is where he worked when he was home, where he struggled with one of those early short-wave radio sets with the large green trapezoidal antenna, where the telephone was on the desk. But it was also the room where our family

spent many hours together, where card games were played, conversation flourished, and debates grew heated and much smoke was blown into the air. All the men smoked then. Ramses cigarettes with a gold mouthpiece. Uncle Karl and Grandfather smoked cigars, but no one ever complained. Although Mother, a lifelong nonsmoker, sometimes mused how the cigar smoke settled in the white floor-length curtains as she aired the room after a long evening.

Life was comfortable on the surface of things. We went to school, Papi to his office, and Mutti and Ana, our friendly maid of long standing, took care of things at home. Frequently, after returning from school, Mother would take me downtown shopping, sometimes to her tailor Mr. Ratzki, a very excitable little Hungarian who apparently never kept his promised deadlines, which caused quite a few acrimonious exchanges with his lady customers. And to Madame Georgi, Mother's corset maker, a particularly galling place where I had to wait forever and always protested while the many ladies scurried in and out of little dressing rooms, and things always seemed to pinch them. And there was that splendid seafood shop with all those wonderful smoked and fresh fish, some still swimming in their tanks. And the great delicatessen store with the impressive array of sausages, hams, franks, smoked meats, and that enticing, seemingly endless variety of splendid cold cuts both the Germans and the French are famous for. In the end we would usually go to the groceries department of Kaufhaus Brühl, the closest thing to today's small supermarket, to shop at the butcher. To reward me for all the earlier waiting, while Mutti shopped there, I would go straight to the extensive toy department where I did not mind waiting at all. The sales clerks knew me, were friendly, and kept an eye on me till Mother came to pick me up. Invariably, then and for years to come I would indulge my passion for the toy soldiers of which I already had a respectable collection and Mother, usually under feigned protests would add one or two. They were beautifully made, about three inches high, hand painted, in all kinds of poses; running, marching, shooting, wounded, on horseback, in tanks and other vehicles, and there were replicas of famous generals, of which my most distinguished possession was serene Field Marshal von Hindenburg. I was very disdainful of similar figures in brown and black uniforms with red armbands and swastikas,

although they were becoming increasingly more visible among the toy soldiers.

Underneath, things were smoldering. The Nazis, with amazing speed were consolidating their power over the country. There were new directives and restrictions every day, more uniforms on the street than ever before. And a widespread harassing of Jews and things Jewish became the norm rather than the exception. We felt this first in school. Boys would appear in *Jungvolk* (Junior Hitler Youth) uniform, the short black pants, brown shirts with the swastika armband over the left sleeve, and the rolled, black kerchief around the collar, held together by a leather thong. And of course a neat, black-sheathed dagger hanging from the belt. At first there were not many, and the teachers were not too pleased with them when they created a disturbance and picked fights with their classmates.

However, as time passed, their numbers and their self-confidence increased. So did the incidents of uniformed gangs trying to beat up nonuniformed kids—Jewish students particularly. The hurled epithets usually included "rotten communist," "dirty socialist," and never to fail, "filthy Jew-pig" or "Itzig" (mangled derivative of the biblical name Yitzhak), a common German pejorative for Jews. Things were not pleasant. Little did I know what was coming!

In the winter of 1933–34 I came down with diphtheria. The morning our pediatrician, the gentle Dr. Friedeman, who was summoned by Mother after I refused to get up, diagnosed the illness, and put the boys in quarantine. An ambulance was called, I was whisked off, wrapped in a blanket in the arms of an EMS driver, to St. George hospital while the boys had a day off from school to be checked and were pronounced clear of any infection.

I spent two months in the isolation ward, and it was a lonely time for a six-year old. Mother came to visit me every day, trudging through the snow just so she could talk with me from the garden through a slightly ajar window which looked out over the hospital grounds. It must have been a difficult trip for her that winter. The hospital was in the suburbs, a long way by streetcar, and all that for a ten to fifteen minute chat through the window. I did not think much about it then, but years later I realized how heroic it was. The daily toy

presents she brought were handed to me by the nurses. And then, after two months, recovered and ready to go home, I suddenly contracted mumps.

It meant another two weeks in the hospital. I was removed from the isolation ward to share a room with an older boy. Very quickly, with that uncanny touch the Germans had, he established that I was Jewish, and that developed immediately into a series of nasty, often threatening arguments. Such as about the past January elections when Hitler became Chancellor by default upon the resignation of his predecessor Chancellor Schleicher, all over the misgivings of the elderly President von Hindenburg. This boy was an ardent Nazi, and when I said that I had always heard that the venerable President was a good man and Adolf Hitler a bum, that did it. Our war never stopped. He was older and bigger than I, harassed me, threatened to report Father to the police. From his dark intimidations, I assumed that now anything was possible in Germany, and I was really frightened. Sensing my fear of him, this sadistic youngster finally coerced me into drinking urine from my chamberpot. In the end he confiscated every one of my toys and games that Mother had brought. I was so afraid of him I didn't dare tell the nurses. I was glad to get out of there.

There was a splendid homecoming party, and the many family members and friends were there. It was then that my patrician mother was appalled to discover that I had acquired a particularly low-class version of the Saxon dialect from my roommate during those two weeks. I was told it was really bad but fortunately, with some effort, it was soon left behind forever. But not the memory of him.

When I returned to school after a three-month absence, I was horrified to realize that I was far behind my classmates, with all of the humiliating giggles of derision that that entails. My initial advantage had disappeared, they could read better than I, knew the rudiments of math, and had started learning multiplication tables. Mother later told of my coming home a day or two later, throwing my books into a corner and grimly pronouncing that I was finished, would not return to school—ever! I had to work hard but with the help of Fräulein Korman, a nice temporary lady tutor Mother hired to help me, I did catch up.

The following years of 1934, 1935, 1936 flowed uneasily into each other. Everyone who was not a Nazi watched the ever-tightening grip of the Hitler regime with growing alarm; the brutal suppression of any and all opposition, even if only whispered, by Himmler's Gestapo and its escalation of anti-Jewish legislation. People speculated apprehensively about the rumors that were circulating about *KZ's*, *Konzentrationslager*, the concentration camps, and persons one knew or had heard of who had simply disappeared.

At the 1935 Nürnberg Nazi Party Rally, its propaganda highlight of the year, well known from the now famous Leni Riefenstahl documentary masterpiece *Triumph of the Will*, for the massed tens of thousands of S.A., S.S., Arbeitsdienst and Wehrmacht standing stiffly at attention, carrying thousands of flags and raising their arms, shouting "*Sieg Heil*" in unison, Hitler legitimized the anti-Semitism he had fomented throughout Germany. That September 15, the *NSDAP*, the National Socialist German Workers Party, issued the so-called Racial Laws. Jews were stripped of their German citizenship, confined to the status of "subjects." They became "stateless," entitled to nothing better than a matching Nansen passport, finding themselves pariahs of international travel, much exploited later when a valid passport of any country was to become the difference between life and death for millions. They were also legally excluded from public life and private employment. Jewish physicians, lawyers, and other professionals could no longer practice. Marriages, even already existing ones, between Jews and Aryans, the latter a Nazi term for Christians, were declared illegal. Extra-marital relations (officially termed *Rassenschande*—racial disgrace or defilement) between Jews and Aryans became a criminal offense subject to hideous punishment. Jewish-owned businesses were seriously restricted and bank accounts frozen. Much Jewish property, especially that considered of value to the State, was expropriated but, still maintaining the appearances of legality, monetary restitution made after tortuous, humiliating court proceedings, and at a fraction of their value. Plus endless other humiliations and restrictions all designed to exclude Jews from public life. Among these, Jews could no longer sit and rest on public benches in the city or in parks. They all bore plaques that read "Not for Jews." Nor were they allowed in movie theaters. Or concerts or restaurants. Jewish

households, many of which belonged to the upper middle class in Germany, were prohibited from employing female Aryan help except those over the age of forty-five, an age group which was virtually nonexistent as household help.

And that meant Ana had to leave our house, whether she wanted to or not. She postponed it as long as possible, but eventually there was an emotional farewell. After twelve or more years as part of our family she had to leave, and everyone was sad, but mostly Ana herself. At that time she confided in Mother that her twelve-year old daughter Traudel, an enthusiastic BDM member with brown uniform and all, had long chastised her mother for working for "those Jews" and had threatened to denounce her if she did not quit. Now Traudel was supremely pleased, even if her mother had lost her employment and with it their livelihood.

Already in 1933, the first year of the Third Reich, Jews had been excluded from public office, the civil service, radio, journalism, farming, teaching, the theater, the films. In 1934 they were removed from the stock exchanges, membership in scientific societies and professional associations. In the years subsequent to the sweeping Nürnberg Laws, either by edict or by terror—the latter usually preceding the former—many additional decrees would outlaw Jews completely.

By the time Germany was courting foreign visitors during its show-case hosting of the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin, it had deprived more than half the Jews in Germany of the means of earning a livelihood. During those few weeks all approaches to Olympic sites that could be seen by foreigners had been painstakingly cleared of the otherwise widely visible signs everywhere that proclaimed "Jews and Dogs are undesirable here" or "No admission to Jews and Pigs" at almost all public places, whether at movie houses and hotels or at life sustaining services such as grocery and butcher shops, bakeries, dairies, and pharmacies. Anyone entering or leaving such facilities anywhere was met with a grim, loud "*Heil Hitler*" and was expected to return same instantly. Noncompliance was subject to severe verbal chastising. Since the Jews of Germany did not comply with this requirement, their shopping was greatly curtailed and reduced to the handful of stores run by friendlier Germans who did not insist on a "*Heil Hitler*" from them. The commonly erected signs outside shops,

towns, villages, parks, theaters, etc., that warned "Jews not permitted here" temporarily disappeared during the Olympics. The hundreds of thousands who flocked to the games in Berlin saw the order, cleanliness, and organizational talents of those Germans and admired them. Very few actually saw through the deception at which the Nazis had become masters. Only such obvious gaffes as Hitler being visibly annoyed when that "inferior Negro," the American sprinter Jesse Owens, won spectacularly in track events over Germany's best, and left the stadium so as not to be present when Owens received his several gold medals, betrayed the Nazi charade of good will.

It was the beginning of a road that would eventually lead to the extinction of Europe's Jews by massacre.

*

Over the years the same question has been asked of me many times by people from other countries who at first never fail to be appalled: If all this horror was taking place in front of your eyes, why didn't you leave?

No one who did not live under the Nazi regime will ever understand the iron grip that police state had on all its citizenry. Up to 1935 anyone, including Jews, could leave the country fairly easily and quite a few did, even many non-Jewish Germans who were appalled at the direction things had taken. But the majority of Germans applauded Hitler, were devoted supporters of any and everything that the Nazi regime undertook, and proud of it. Whether it was the systematic elimination of Jews from the social fabric of the nation, or the establishment of concentration camps to warehouse all perceived enemies of the regime, Socialists, Communists, Gypsies, plain non-Nazis, men of the church who spoke out, social misfits, mentally handicapped, homosexuals. These camps, widely whispered about as KZ's, were scattered throughout Germany, many in close proximity to centers of population. Dachau, the very first KZ and one of the largest, was only ten miles from Munich, the capital of Bavaria. Their existence could not be ignored. Yet the German population looked the other way when someone was picked up on the street, beaten, and carted off. When houses and apartments were suddenly empty, their Jewish occupants

having disappeared without a trace, it was simply said that "they had moved away." It was unhealthy to ask pointed questions. The few who cared kept saying "What can I do" and left it at that. The complacency of the German population and accommodation with the regime was complete.

As to the Jews, they watched the events incredulously, as if they could not really be happening. Most were German-born, it was their country and for many, as in our case, that of their fathers. Not a few of them had fought with distinction in the German armies of World War I. When they came home from the war in 1918, many then proudly wore the Iron Cross, and the country assured all returning soldiers, without distinction, "The gratitude of the Nation is yours forever!" Many were self-employed as physicians, attorneys, architects, or had their own businesses, were successful and respected members of German society until 1933, and like my family, led comfortable lives.

In happened in plain daylight. Deportation of Jewish residents of the city of Wütrzburg in 1942, obviously witnessed by the public lining the sidewalks. It is scenes like this that make a mockery of the standard post-war answer given by all the Germans that "they had no idea of what was happening to their neighbors, the Jews.".

Germany was a nation with a long tradition of culture. There was the conviction, call it delusion, that the madness simply could not go on much longer. There were altogether 500,000 Jews in all of Germany, a country of 60 million, and any halfway intelligent person had to conclude that, even in the face of the anti-Semitic Nazi party line, it was impossible for a mere half million Jews to be responsible for all the ills of the nation. The Jews of Germany told themselves that the "good Germans," and there were many, just had to see through it all. They would soon throw out Hitler and his henchmen. Finally, leaving one's birthplace, home, friends, and everything one had built for so many years to emigrate to another, strange place was most difficult even to contemplate.

The fact is, it was wishful thinking. The "good Germans" did not undertake anything. Everyone knew at least several. As time progressed they simply disappeared, vanished from one's circle of friends or acquaintances. Our parents were for many years very good friends with a well-to-do German couple in Leipzig, the Berliners. Their socializing included invitations to each other's homes, parties, dinners, joint evenings at the theater, opera, concerts. Eugen Berliner was a fellow Master Mason in Father's Lodge. We were always given to understand it was a good friendship. By 1935 it had frayed. There would be repeated excuses for why they were unable to meet, go out together. Later that year, Father told us, Eugen Berliner called him at his office and, in a tortured, left-handed way, made it clear that the relationship had to end, that Father would understand. Several weeks later, as coincidence will have it, Mother, while downtown, was looking into the display window of a store when, in the glass reflection, she suddenly noticed Mrs. Berliner a few feet away, walking by. In a reflex after years of friendship, Mother turned around to wave at her, catch her attention, call her name, when their eyes met. Her waving hand fell to her side. Mrs. Berliner flinched for a second, then looked right through and past Mother as if she weren't there and hurriedly continued on her way. Mother came home devastated and humiliated. Of course she understood why she had been snubbed.

Instead, the Germans were spellbound by Hitler's speeches. No lie was too big. Soon after the take-over in January 1933, Jews became fair game for anyone who wanted to insult, humiliate, cheat or assault

them. It became progressively more acute in the years to follow. But on one very early occasion, there was still the chance to strike back. Late one evening in the summer of 1933, Father and his three brothers and their wives were returning from a concert in the Gewandhaus, downtown. The four brothers, all big men over six feet two and Max a giant of six foot five, ambled peacefully down Gohliserstrasse to Karl's apartment for a nightcap, the four sisters-in-law walking some fifteen feet ahead of them, all leisurely conversing. Suddenly, five or six drunken brownshirts returning from a party rally at the nearby zoo, overtook them and started hurling anti-Semitic insults. The four brothers exchanged quick glances, and a few seconds later, with Max in the lead, there were four Nazis down on the sidewalk, groaning. Their surprise at having the tables turned was so complete that they hightailed it out of there as fast as they could get back on their booted feet. Before the four women realized with horror that a fist fight had started, it was already over.

At this instant, a gentleman walked across the deserted street from the other side, pulled out his card, and handing it to the brothers, insisted on being called as a witness, as there was sure to be an aftermath. Indeed there was an aftermath. In court some weeks later, the three brothers, accused by the rowdies of having provoked a fight, the stranger from across the street made short shrift of it in his testimony, causing the judge to dismiss the complaint summarily. Six months later, such an incident would have ended very differently.

By the time the Jews of Germany woke up to the grim realities surrounding them, it was almost too late. The gates were almost closed. No one knew it then, but the Nazi state was already waiting for a pretext to confiscate their property, "aryanize" their businesses. This was done through a *Treuhänder*, a trustee, a Nazi "supervisor," forcibly installed by the state in all major Jewish enterprises. Such *Treuhänder* were entitled to conduct the businesses as they saw fit. Being no more than loyal party hacks without any business experience, they often ran a successful business right into the ground. In retrospect, despite the Nazis' constant haranguing about Germany's poverty and poor economic status, they systematically and senselessly destroyed a good part of the country's infrastructure for the dubious sake of promoting anti-Semitism. This was to reach its apogee on

Kristallnacht, November 1938, when billions in Jewish-owned property—basically German property—was ransacked and burned.

Building the kind of army Hitler needed to carry out his ambitions took lots of money. Aside from his eager heavy industry patrons, who better to finance it than the generally well-to-do but hapless Jewish population?

Besides, where would German Jews go? Most countries were making entry very difficult. The few smaller European nations who opened their doors to them could, in reality, only absorb very limited numbers.

It is gratifying to know that a handful of well motivated people in Britain took notice of the storm that had enveloped Germany's Jews. A British Refugee Committee was in existence, sponsored predominantly by the Quakers, who, with the obvious approval of the government, undertook to evacuate Jewish children from Germany. This was in stark contrast to similar Quaker efforts made in the U.S., which were insidiously and continuously defeated by the State Department.

Working together with organizations still functioning under the Nazis, some 7,000 Jewish children, all under 18, were, in what became known as the Children's Transports, evacuated to Great Britain. A personal friend, now living in the Washington area, and then 17, was on one of those transports after *Kristallnacht*, sometime in late 1938. There were several youth camps made available for this purpose by Woburn House, as it became known, in London, the organizational center for this humanitarian effort. (See also Chapter 17.)

The youngsters were initially housed in summer vacation camps, 300 to 500 per camp, and were screened, prior to placing them with British homes that were to become their extended families. My friend, expressing a career choice in textiles, eventually joined a family in Manchester, who not only gave him an affectionate home but also arranged for his training as a textile machinery engineer. The experience was so positive that they keep in close contact to this day, even with the new generation.

After the war broke out, the British authorities became concerned as to who all the German-born nationals then living in England really were (most were Jews), and whether they were legitimate refugees.

The suspicion had arisen that there might be German agents among them. Another screening, this time quite rigorous, was instituted. They were separated into friendly and enemy aliens. As a friendly alien, with many hundreds of others, he was sent to an internment camp near Liverpool, where he stayed for some six months. The British provided housing and food, some military personnel to guard the camp, while the internees were left on their own, organizing their existence and routine entirely by themselves. Others, for lack of available space, were shipped off to the Dominions, i.e., Canada, Australia. The way to get out of internment was to volunteer for farm labor out in the country, to join the British Army (which another friend of mine did, becoming an officer in military intelligence), or emigrate elsewhere. The frustration and growing despair among the internees, especially the older generation who had escaped Hitler's Germany and deemed themselves free, was such that it lead to occasional suicides. My friend eventually joined his mother and brother in Brazil in 1941, traveling on a British freighter in a convoy. We met there after the war and have been friends since.

Altogether, while it may not have been ideal, it certainly saved their lives from the Nazi killing machine that would have caught up with them eventually. The efforts of the Quakers, without whose initiative all this would not have taken place, were outstanding humanitarian acts altogether too rarely imitated by others.

Some Christians in the Netherlands and Denmark equally deserve gratitude for their actions on behalf of Jewish refugees vis-à-vis the German occupation forces at the time, limited though they were by their size. And there were the rather heartwarming, selfless, and highly risky efforts by an entire village in France during the occupation, at hiding, as their own, a substantial number of Jewish youngsters, that flew in the face of the Gestapo and French security forces hunting for them.

So it was possible to save lives. What was needed was the humanity and the will, too infrequently allowed to surface.

America, that land of promise where everyone wanted to go, was quite officially hiding behind a quota system that allowed only a handful of immigrants each year from each country. Thousands who had applied for visas to the United States had to comply with complex

rules and paperwork regulations, frequently amended, changed, and with tight, sometimes impossible deadlines. It was a shameful procedure, a deliberate, nasty hurry-up-and-wait game imposed on people whose time was running out. The crowning achievement of any successful visa application was the absolutely essential Affidavit of Support to be provided by some distant relative in America. Those who applied and fulfilled the requirements as early as 1933, 1934, or 1935 waited anxiously for years for their quota number to come up.

Our uncles Benny and Little Max were in that group. The chief State Department official responsible for refugee matters during the Roosevelt administration, Breckenridge Long, Jr., was a paranoid anti-Semite, who regarded all Jews as communists and actively opposed and sabotaged whatever isolated efforts were advanced in the Congress to ease the immigration issue for European Jewry. This was not merely isolationism. Long had the power of the State Department behind him. He had read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and publicly parroted it as "eloquent in opposition to Jewry and to Jews as exponents of Communism and chaos." He officially instructed all U.S. consulates abroad, in dealing with visa applications from German and Austrian Jews, to "postpone, postpone and postpone again."

In this manner, the annual quota of German and Austrian immigrants, to begin with set at 28,600 per year, was never even filled. Breckenridge Long in Washington saw to that. While America debated in splendid isolation, indifferent to it all, many thousands of intelligent, well educated, competent professionals who could make valuable economic contributions to any modern society were painstakingly forced to sit on their hands in Germany or elsewhere in Europe, waiting for their quota number to come up before being able to leave. Time ran out, and thousands were caught by the outbreak of the war in September 1939. From then on, the Germans had their number—tattooed into their arms!

The German and Austrian Jews, over whom the Nazi state had absolute control as their citizens, had officially become "stateless," an *in limbo* legal status imposed by the 1935 Nürnberg Laws, which summarily withdrew their German nationality and passports. Many lesser foreign ministries in the rest of the world did not know how to deal with stateless persons. Bureaucracy and anti-Semitism being what

they are, it was convenient not to do anything. Unofficially, many a consular official became rich, selling visas to those who could meet their demands. The world, looking away as usual, forced the Jews living under the Nazis to remain where they were, often unable to produce a valid passport or enough money to obtain a visa to somewhere, anywhere. And wait, while the ground burned under their feet.

CHAPTER 4

Of Summer Vacations And School

In those years, our best times invariably were summer vacations from school when we all traveled together to nearby Czechoslovakia and spent wonderful, free, and unencumbered weeks in Marienbad, the

Father and Mother in Marienbad. Sometime in the 30s.

famous spa where the adults took the waters, and tried to diet to lose some weight. They were mostly unsuccessful, for the food was simply too scrumptious. Delicious cooked and slightly smoked Prague ham, *Marillenknödel*, sweet dumplings filled with fresh apricots and served hot with a sprinkle of bread crumbs, a touch of cinnamon, and melted butter, an endless variety of superb tortes and pastry, topped with real whipped cream were not to be ignored easily.

Uncles, aunts, and friends with valid passports were there too. The adults could breathe freely again and talk openly without fear of being overheard. Marienbad was not Hitler-friendly country. It was our favorite time of the year, and I have the most vividly pleasant recollections of breakfasts with the Schauer family at the Cafe Bellevue and afternoon tea-times, with uncles Karl or Benny and their wives after a leisurely stroll by the group up a long hill to Cafe Rübezahl, with delicious pastries while the adults around us danced to the latest popular tune by a group called the Andrew Sisters, "*Bei mir bist Du schön.*"

On the way home one year Father took us all to visit Prague and showed us the sights of Hradcany Castle, Wenceslas Square, the Karl Bridge, the very old Jewish cemetery harking back to the Middle Ages. We were duly impressed. Freddie, at this time a full fledged teenager, enjoyed the special privilege of vacationing with a similar-aged group of boys and girls at a supervised youth camp also in Czechoslovakia, and we three exchanged our respective summer experiences upon return home. One year he allowed us to see the photo of a nice looking girl he obviously had befriended at camp that summer. She had written on the photo's back a rather intimate signature "Affectionately, Your beast" that set Robbie and me to speculate on our big brother's romantic escapades.

In 1936 our summer vacation destination was Hungary, for a change. Balaton Füred, a spa on the shore of famous Lake Balaton. We had a long train trip and it was a true adventure. There, as arranged, we again met up with Father and Mother's best friends, Rose and Richard Schauer, he CEO of a major music publishing house, the Benjamin Verlag. They had arrived with their younger daughter in their Horch car driven by Kühnast, their chauffeur. We were fond of their two girls Irene and Hannerle of same age as Freddie and Robbie. We had sort of grown up with them, gone to each other's birthdays,

spent summer weekends at their country villa in Probstheida, outside of Leipzig. A place in the country was a pretty big deal then for city children. We boys had a joyous time with Hannerle there, while staying in one of those splendid old-fashioned European spa hotels that today barely exist anymore. Irene, much like Freddie, was vacationing at a youth camp somewhere else.

It was here that Robbie befriended a young Hungarian, a most splendid swimmer, named Astalos Andre. Astalos introduced us to the then brand-new "butterfly" style. He volunteered, in his funny, fractured German, to show us the sights around Lake Balaton. It was here that Robbie, alertly observing others around the Lake's shores, suddenly developed a passion for fishing. However, this could only be pursued at the cost of a rather expensive Hungarian fishing license. Father balked at this during dinner one evening, when the request came up. Naturally Robbie was disappointed while I, in my loyal desire to come to my brother's aid, tried to convince Father of the validity of his request. I passionately pointed out to Papi that such a license would not only be good for an entire year but was valid throughout Hungary! It did not take me too long to figure out why the adults around the dinner table could scarcely conceal their amusement at my logic which, to my embarrassment, was to haunt me for years to come.

But the men got restless, for there really was not that much to do in Balaton Füred. After two weeks, we had explored everything, including a boring sailing trip on the lake during which we were utterly becalmed. One morning, sitting together over a splendid breakfast on the sunny terrace, Father and "Uncle" Richard, as we called him, laid out a proposal for us to vote on. We could either stay here another two weeks, or go to Budapest where the comparatively meager Hungarian currency allotted us by the *Reichsbank* would last only one week! It was my first experiment in democracy. I, nine years old, had the same vote as the adults. What a question! Later that very morning we were en route to Budapest in Schauer's car and what a wonderful new world opened up. Our hotel booking (Father and Richard had anticipated the vote outcome!) was in the beautiful St. Gellert, situated on a hill overlooking both halves of the city, Buda and Pest, separated by the Danube and connected by bridge after bridge across the broad river.

Everyone was ecstatic except for one small inconvenience. It was exceptionally hot, much hotter than we were accustomed to. We were all perspiring profusely, especially Father who did not take well to excessive heat, and Robbie and I realized his discomfort. Quickly, after counting our own allowance leftovers we took a discreet loan from Mutti and disappeared into one of the hotel lobby shops we had explored minutes earlier. In a flash we were back and presented Father with a fancy flashlight-sized battery-run pocket fan. He was genuinely grateful, amused and impressed by our inventiveness. He used it extensively for the entire next week, dispatching us periodically to obtain fresh batteries.

Budapest was dazzling. Everything was new to us, the large swimming pools with artificial waves, the food experience, authentic Hungarian goulash in different variations, creamy spicy chicken paprikash, eating corn on the cob for the first time, authentic *Czardas* music everywhere in cafes and restaurants bursting with mouthwatering cakes, tortes, pastries and real chantilly, the carefree air of the friendly Hungarians, the sights, the sheer beauty of the city. It was all so different from what we had come to realize was a drab, oppressive Germany.

In March of 1936, Hitler took his first big gamble. He denounced the Pact of Locarno and boldly ordered troops from the newly created Wehrmacht to march into the demilitarized Rhineland. Everyone was stunned. Now certainly Europe would come to its senses and confront Hitler. After all, France, the major military power in Europe, had some thirty-six active divisions and would demand immediate withdrawal. This insult was too flagrant and one could already speculate what it would do to Hitler. He had gone too far. But nothing of the sort happened. Inexplicably, France quietly acquiesced, the rest of Europe looked the other way. The one and only opportunity to put Hitler in his place and avoid what no one except himself yet knew was coming, was utterly missed by doing absolutely nothing.

The cold reality was that the Wehrmacht was not yet powerful enough to back up such an operation. It had only one full strength division, properly uniformed and equipped with small arms plus a few pieces of light artillery. Any tanks that were there were merely

prototypes. The General Staff was appalled at the adventure and warned the Führer. The soldiers marched smartly across the bridges into the Rhineland by daylight, very visible, and in the darkness crept back in quiet rubber rafts to where they had come from, only to repeat the same brisk march the next day for all to see. It was a very cool gamble, and it paid off. Several divisions for the price of one! And the Germans cheered their Führer. He had given them a cheap victory.

The 1936 fall school semester was a nightmare. The Olympics were over. The signs returned. The atmosphere in class was awful. By now all the teachers sported swastika buttons in their lapels and acted accordingly. The handful of Jewish students were constantly harassed both in class by the teachers and outside, where the other students attacked us. Hardly a day went by without bitter, painful fist fights in the corridors or out in the yard, always against a numerically superior gang, while the teachers just looked on impassively. In class we handful of Jews were often severely punished for being "troublemakers" just for defending ourselves. Once outside the school building on the way home, gangs of other students, cowardly composed of all age groups, lay in waiting, invariably five or six to one. We tried to stick together and sometimes succeeded. The smaller and weaker took a terrible beating, and even the stronger boys, like me, only managed by reason of constantly battling the gauntlet. Robbie, going to the same school, faced similar assaults, but he and his classmates were all three years older, bigger, stronger, better able to defend themselves, so that their attackers could not count on the same success rate.

One afternoon, after one of those street fights, I limped home to receive another of those awful scoldings from Mother as she surveyed my torn clothes, contusions on face, arms and hands, and, of course, half my schoolbooks missing. While she laced into me, never giving me a chance to explain, Father, who had stayed home that day, appeared from his study. He looked me over and demanded, "What happened, Harry?" While I related what happened in the streets, Mother chimed in angrily, "He has come home in that condition rather often lately and I'm getting tired of buying him new clothes all the time."

There was silence. Father looked at me, at Mother, got himself down to my level and with an eerie quiet put his hands on my shoulders. "I will buy you a new suit, new shoes, and new books every

day, but I want you to defend yourself, every time, everywhere."

It was the moment when he must have painfully realized that things had gone too far. Barely two weeks or so later, Papi and Mutti announced that they had made arrangements for Robbie and me to go to school in Italy.

Freddie, now fifteen, and attending his *Schiller Gymnasium*, was experiencing few such problems as we did in public school. He did have his fights, though, and one day he secretly showed us a few *HJ* swastika pins as well as a lapel insignia consisting of three arrows pointing downward at an angle. He had sort of liberated these during a brawl. The swastika pins were obvious. The one with the three slanted arrows was the emblem of the Communists, outlawed, and anyone possessing such a thing would be in dangerous trouble.

So, in the spring of 1937, arrangements completed, our parents traveled with Robbie and me to Merano, Italy, to bring us to the *Alpines Schulheim*, a boarding school. Having selected it at arm's length, from a brochure, they wanted to assure themselves personally that their choice was a correct one. Located on a mountain top of the Dolomite range in the Italian Alps, the former Tyrol region of Austria, high up and reachable only by a fifteen minute cable car ride, it was to become a wonderful, peaceful, and utterly free refuge for us. It was run by a very fine German couple of professional teachers, the Richters, both with Ph.D.s in education; it was small, with an enrollment of some forty boys and girls ranging in age from ten to sixteen. All were from Germany, most were Jewish, and were all escaping from the same atmosphere.

We were in seventh heaven. After our parents left us a few days later, we were away from home alone for the first time, but it took only few days to get comfortable in our new surroundings. Everything was quite simple; no glitz, no luxuries. The children were assigned living quarters in three good-sized chalets, one for the older boys, one for the girls, and the largest, the Main House where we also took our meals, for the younger boys like me, more closely supervised by the Richters. Some of the teachers lived there also. Robbie, to my envy, was assigned to the older boys' chalet. I shared a room with three other youngsters on the top floor. It had an enormous balcony overlooking mountains and alpine meadows, where cow bells tinkled

pleasantly in our ears all the time. For city kids it was true paradise. There were no cars, only horse-drawn carts. A few tourists stayed at the very attractive chalet-like hotel a few hundred feet away, and the local farmers tended their small herds of cows and goats. Classes were mostly held outdoors, sitting on the grass or strolling in the woods. We were indoors only in bad weather. We took the same academic courses we were accustomed to, except that now we also had to struggle with Italian.

I was not a terribly good student at first. Especially not in English. I just could not make it. Our teacher, Hannah, a stern spinster who insisted on being called HB, always gave me, her worst student as she never failed to point out, lots of homework. All our other teachers were really wonderful, especially that young couple, our music teachers, who gave us evenings of song and piano. There was an astounding atmosphere of camaraderie among the children and the teachers, and we were not used to that. It took us some time to get rid of our German tensions, of having to be on guard at all times, but we soon succeeded.

We were happily introduced to Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, sung in true opera boffo style by Wolf while his attractive wife Gaby, on whom several of us had a secret crush, accompanied him. We couldn't get enough of it. There were many exciting hiking excursions into the mountains, getting up at four in the morning and donning nailed boots and shorts, so as to be up on the high peaks in time to watch the sunrise. We learned much about mountain climbing, dealing with carabiners and ropes in summer, and skiing in winter. For both of these activities I developed a passion that was never to leave me. Robbie became the school's unofficial tree climbing champion, and as a special privilege he took me climbing, and we balanced ourselves in the pines fifty and sixty feet above ground, enjoying the view while devouring our sandwiches and feeling wonderfully contented, like free spirits.

Altogether, it was a wonderful phase of our lives. Our meals were obviously good, in the style of German/Austrian cuisine to match the students' upbringing. We gained weight, got stronger from all the outdoor exercise, and did not mind the KP duty for which everyone had to take a regular turn. Setting tables, serving meals, and helping the

friendly kitchen staff wash and dry dishes for some sixty people was fun, and we were always rewarded afterward by being allowing to dip into the big containers of raisins and nuts.

It was at the Richters' Schulheim that I briefly experienced my first crush on a girl. Ulla was a very lissome, athletic blond, who lived in the girl's chalet, and I could secretly admire her daily at mealtimes. She was a few years older, but that didn't seem to bother me. She was pleasant and friendly, but she paid very little attention to me. I was hurt to discover she was really Robbie's girl but I quickly got over it. There were so many other activities to occupy me.

Eventually, happy as we all were, schoolwork became pleasant, and we learned easily, getting good grades. Despite all the outdoor activities, the Richters and Dr. Schneider, the principal, saw to it that classes and homework were taken seriously and everyone cooperated willingly. We had no school vacation period, for the whole experience was one long vacation. And besides, who wanted to go home to Germany?

It was there, for some peculiar reason, that I developed a fondness for those little foil-wrapped triangles of soft Gruyere cheese, inexpensively purchased at the one and only little general store on the mountain, next to the cablecar station, and I must admit that they consumed a good share of my allowance. Not that I was hungry; our meals were "all you can eat." I just liked them like other kids eat chocolate. And, I confess, I like them to this day. They never fail to remind me of those happy times.

At one point, Dr. Schneider announced a ten-day hiking trip far into the Dolomite Range for anyone reaching a certain high level of grades in every single discipline. Of course, most of us wanted to go. In the weeks leading up to the final selection, lists with our grades were posted in the dining room and were scrutinized anxiously. Everyone knew everyone else's performance, and we encouraged each other. Finally, the selected participants were announced with great fanfare. Robbie and I had made it. Instructions were issued on the contents of our backpacks, how to dress, and an itinerary with our daily destinations, and the farms or country inns we would stay at overnight was posted. Medical checkups were undertaken, and then, one early morning the group had breakfast together, last minute instructions

were issued, and we departed to the envious farewells of those who sadly had to stay behind.

By the time we had hiked four hours down the mountain to Lana, the little suburb of Merano where one otherwise gets on or off the funicular, the cablecar, Robbie was limping, and try as he might to hide it, Dr. Schneider noticed. Examining him, he discovered that Robbie had an infected toenail. To Robbie's terrible disappointment Dr. Schneider declared him medically unfit to continue the hike, and put him and a few others on the cablecar back up the mountain. I felt so sorry for him, he wanted to come so badly and had worked hard for it. He was my brother, we were a good team, and I would miss him.

Other than that, it was absolutely wonderful. We hiked over mountain trails, through country roads and tranquil alpine meadows, climbed sheer mountain faces and chimneys, used ropes and learned to rappel and watch out for each other, slept in barns or modest country inns, chewed on bread and Italian salami at lunch, had our dinners of mostly Austrian farmer's fare at long rough-hewn wooden tables. A few times we hilariously struggled learning how to eat spaghetti without it hanging out of our faces, told tales and usually collapsed into the straw or beds quite early. Without us perceiving it, it was part of our education, and the various teachers who came along, including everyone's favorites, Gaby and Wolf, taught us many things we might otherwise have missed.

We were encouraged to write home at least once every week, and got frequent mail from Mother and Father, not to speak of little love packages with our favorite goodies.

It was early March 1938. The political atmosphere in Europe was reaching critical mass once more. Hitler, an Austrian to begin with, had been making noisy demands on Austria. All along, the Austrian Nazis had been busily agitating for that country to join with Germany. "Coming home to the Reich," they called it. Father had earlier written the Richters from Leipzig, arranging with them to put us on a train back home upon receipt of a telegram with a certain codeword from him. If anything serious was to happen in Europe, he wanted his family together. On March 11 his telegram arrived. Our wonderful year in Italy came to an abrupt halt. Sadly we bade everyone farewell, and

very early the next day, Dr. Schneider accompanied Robbie and me to Merano and put us on a train to Munich.

It was March 12, 1938. *Anschluss*, Annexation. The day Hitler's troops marched into Austria and just took it, while Robbie and I were traveling from Merano to Bolzano, and from there to the Brenner Pass, that famous Austro-Italian border station high in the mountains. Our train arrived at the Brenner around 08:00. Instead of the usual Austrian border police, we were already greeted with the all too familiar outstretched arms, the almost forgotten *Heil Hitler* and Wehrmacht uniforms. German Army units swarmed all over the Brenner station. All this at 08:00 when the Germans were supposed to have just crossed the northern border, many hundred kilometers away. To add to our joint nervousness, I absolutely had to relieve myself that minute,

The monstrous becomes an everyday event. March 12, 1938, Anschluss of Austria. A Jewish boy is forced to paint the word "Jew" on the front wall of a building, stolidly supervised by other youngsters, some already in Jungvolk uniforms. Note the expression of the adult "enforcer," already wearing a swastika armband.

and while I was engaged, a German passport control officer unceremoniously unlocked the toilet door with his pass key, and flung it open. No doubt, he expected to find a dangerous enemy of the Third Reich in hiding, not a scared eleven-year-old, but he didn't even have the sense to acknowledge the humor of the situation. He grimly demanded to see my travel documents right then and there.

The train ride through Austria, past Innsbruck, was highlighted by Wehrmacht units on the move and thousands of swastika banners sprouting from buildings everywhere. We felt menaced again and, after the camaraderie in Italy, very much alone. In Munich several hours later, we were met at the train station by Father's Munich representative, a friendly gentlemen who took us under his wing for a few hours, fed us a lunch of delicious Bavarian *Weisswurst*, and then put us back on the right train for Leipzig where Mutti and Papi were anxiously waiting for us.

Now that we were back, it was of course essential that we continue our schooling. In the year since we left in early 1937, Jewish children

The author (second row, right) in the Carlebach school, Leipzig, September 1938.

had been excluded from attending German schools. It was claimed that the Jewish influence was poisoning the racially pure German children. The all-Jewish *Carlebach* school named after its founder, a famous rabbi, in the Gustav Adolfstrasse 7, which had already been in existence for years, had been enlarged, and all of Leipzig's Jewish children, from ages six through eighteen, went there. Officially it was the Jüdische Schule (an ordinary designation, very much like a term for a Catholic or Protestant parochial school), but the Germans, in their nastiness, called it the *Judenschule*. To those not familiar with idiomatic German, these appear as remarkably similar words, but in reality are worlds apart in meaning. Judenschule was a contemptible, cynical name, generically denoting anything that reeked of lack of discipline, chaos, disorder, dirty ghetto children and everything that was despicable, and by Nazi definition, associated with Jews. It was often used also in association with non-Jewish Poles and Russians.

Had people bothered to look, they would have been surprised. The school atmosphere in no way fit their preconceived notion. The curriculum was tougher than any we had ever faced before, and our teachers, whether Jewish or not, were superb. The latter, obvious political misfits by Nazi standards, were being punished for their liberal trends by being assigned to the *Judenschule*. They never had a smarter or more eager student body. For them, teaching "was a joy," as they said.

Not that we did not pull the usual, playful tricks that kids everywhere engage in both to annoy their teachers and to amuse themselves. In reality we were no different, just healthy, curious, hell-bent youngsters, perhaps more mature for our age and more aware. We certainly had a great deal of respect for our teachers and our pranks reflected that, especially when one reads about the not-so-innocent antics in today's inner city schools.

All our friends were there, our older cousins Heinz and Erich, and of course, Freddie, all of whom had had to leave their respective private *Gymnasiums*. It was the only time we all attended the same school. It was a friendly but competitive place, unlike the outside world, where the same hordes of Nazi kids would lie in wait for all those welcome targets to gang up on. Officially sanctioned, such street brawling had become a national pastime, and passing pedestrians,

even nearby policeman, just looked on passively if not eagerly. Except that now we were many and protected each other, rather on the shipping convoy principle. There were always older, stronger boys around to protect the younger, weaker ones. Eventually the street toughs were taught such a lesson that they retreated, and left the *Judenschule* alone. We had only isolated problems.

Professor Menzel, a tall, elderly white-maned gentleman with bushy Emperor Franz Josef sideburns, who taught the seniors advanced subjects, was the school's resident Einstein. Fluent in twenty-one languages, he was also Germany's leading linguistic expert on Sanskrit. An unabashed Socialist, Menzel's outstanding talents, in typical Nazi fashion, were considered decadent and undesirable, and so he was permitted to teach mere Jews. The students occasionally prevailed upon him to conduct after-class seminars on philosophy and besieged him with thorny political questions of the times that could never be whispered about on the outside. The professor always obliged with keen insight and biting irony. He was an inspiration to youngsters coming of age in a brutally repressive and hostile society. He and several other of our non-Jewish teachers were also shining examples of the shrinking number of decent Germans, who opposed the Nazi regime at considerable personal peril.

All youth organizations were banned (and there were many sectarian and non-sectarian in Germany before 1933), except the *HJ* and the equivalent *BDM*, but for some reason the United Jewish Communities of Germany were allowed to found the Jewish Boy Scouts. Called the JPD (*Jüdischer Pfadfinderbund Deutschlands*), it was patterned after the international scout movement, although naturally not affiliated with it. How the Nazis permitted that is a mystery to this day. One might assume that, with their penchant for order and organization, this gave the Gestapo an ingenious tool to maintain lists of everyone and keep track of people.

We were not allowed to wear uniforms, but as each troop met in different private homes at least once a week, we changed into our green boy scout shirts with blue rolled kerchiefs around the collar. Our troop leaders were the older boys (Freddie was my troop leader briefly) and there was a good deal of discipline and comradeship. But it wasn't like Switzerland or America, where one belonged openly to the

Boy Scouts, for there was always an air of illegality about it.

That summer, Mother, with great reluctance, allowed Robbie to join Freddie in a large JPD camp for two weeks. Robbie's and my troop leaders had to come to the house and do their utmost to persuade her to give her permission, but I, vehement protests notwithstanding, was considered too young to go. It would be a gathering of perhaps 200 to 300 boy scouts, doing what they do everywhere in the world; cooking their own food over open fires, exploring, hiking, living in tents, sitting around campfires, experiencing close comradeship, telling scary stories. Papi and Mutti told amusedly of their one-time visit on Parents Day where the youngsters feted their elders with camp-cooked meals and he observed how one of the boys, preparing lemonade in a huge cauldron, was blithely stirring it, in the absence of a large enough spoon, with the fallen branch of a nearby tree.

Except, that one day the camp leaders got wind that a not very distant camp of Hitler Youth had decided to attack them during the night. These older boys, between sixteen and nineteen years old, usually strapping fellows, had quietly prepared for just such an eventuality. Sundown to sunup watches were in effect, and scouts were posted in trees, so they soon knew well in advance that the HJ were approaching. A battle royal followed. Only the *Hitlerjugend* were not content to fight with their fists alone. They were serious about inflicting damage, and soon enough their short little daggers, engraved with "Blood and Honor," were enlisted to help. As it happened, they were taking a beating from those they had been brainwashed to have such contempt for. This seriously nasty brawl did last a good long time. The younger ones were told to stay in the center of the tent city under the protection of some older boys armed with sticks, but some of them did not follow their orders too scrupulously, stole away from the tents and got into the midst of the fight. By the time it was over, as the Hitler Youth left the field limping, both sides were nursing bruises and knife cuts. Cousin Heinz had a stab wound clear through his left hand.

Shortly thereafter, as Freddie told us later, they broke camp, as those responsible were certain the Nazis would return with plenty of reinforcements. They would not take kindly to having been beaten by those Untermenschen. The JPD never organized camping again.

Late in 1937 an important problem surfaced that later had a life-and-death bearing on the crucial events that overtook our lives.

Father, I was told, had occasionally been overheard philosophizing that in order to be a respected individual in Germany, one must be a foreign national from a respectable country. He did not like being a German in Germany. Sometime in 1934 he managed to turn his conviction into reality. When a close business associate informed him that, through connections, it was possible for a handful of select individuals to acquire Costa Rican passports for a fee from the Costa Rican embassy in Berlin, he seized the opportunity. For payment of a discreet fee, he and Mother became the holders of Costa Rican passports, and we three, as minors, were listed and photo-identified together in Mother's.

Given the extensive traveling that our parents did, these passports were soon brimming with countless visa stamps, exit and entry permits, thus gaining more and more legitimacy. If anything in the world impressed German bureaucrats, it was some other bureaucrat's official rubber stamp, and ours had lots of those.

Late in 1937 Father received a letter from the German Foreign Office, informing him that his son Manfred (Freddie) had turned sixteen that April and that, once he reached seventeen, he could no longer be included in Mother's passport but needed to present one of his own.

These passports, while certainly authentic, and thus legal documents, had made us foreign nationals, a form of protection in a country that still recognized appearances. However they were obtained years earlier in what one might call a personal transaction between Father and a Costa Rican embassy official in Berlin. Father had, in the intervening years, heard rumors that several of that issue of passports had been recalled by the Berlin embassy although, to his own relief, he was never notified of any abnormality regarding his and Mother's. He had always kept his fingers crossed. Yet, now he had no choice but, like Daniel, to enter the lion's den and request an individual passport for Freddie. It was risky. He agonized at length over how to deal with this dilemma. If it went the wrong way, we could be stripped of our passports and thus be deprived of a strong suit of armor in uncertain times, not to speak of the German official reaction, bound to be most unpleasant. At best we would be turned into stateless persons.

Eventually, he and Mother took the bull by the horns and, with great trepidation, traveled to Berlin to see the Costa Rican consulate. He was received rather well, but upon voicing his request for Freddie's own passport, he was silently shown to a bookshelf where a whole stack of passports identical to his had been recalled. But he had done his homework. In passing he mentioned his acquaintance with the work of the consul's wife's with poor children in Costa Rica and that he would be pleased to make a generous donation to aid her efforts. It was an elegant way to offer a subtle bribe, and it found a suitable echo. For an appreciable donation, Freddie was issued his very own official and legitimate travel document, a rather impressive sheet of embossed stationery, no regular passports being available at the embassy at that moment, and in the process, Father's and Mother's passports were extended as well, since they were to expire in another year or so—in itself a source of considerable additional concern that Father did not know how to address, until that very moment.

No one who did not live through those times, when one's only hope of survival lay in possessing a valid passport, can understand the impact of those hours in Berlin on our lives and future.

A Large Family

When our entire family all got together, there was quite a crowd. And that's how it was at our house during festivities in honor of Robbie's Bar Mitzvah in January of 1937 before we left for school in Italy. That was the last party we ever celebrated in Germany, the last joyful occasion when the family came together and tried to forget the troubled times.

Robbie's Bar Mitzvah was a splendid affair. Cantor Jaffe of our beautiful, spacious synagogue in the Gottschedstrasse graciously took

Father takes his boys and niece Anita to the Leipzig Fair. Standing: Freddie (proudly wearing his Schiller Gymnasium cap), cousin Anita. Seated, left: Harry, right: Robbie. 1933.

Mother, Bernhard, and "Tatschi," São Paulo, 1982.

a back seat to Robbie during Sabbath services, and he acquitted himself well. A large crowd was expected afterward at our home, so Mother had planned the catering carefully with Zellner's, a favorite Jewish restaurant in town. The long line of guests, friends, and well wishers were served from a constantly replenished buffet set up in the huge dining room. In deference to a handful of Orthodox guests, everything was kosher, although that was not the custom in our house ordinarily. Everyone brought terrific presents for Robbie as is customary on this great occasion, and he was overwhelmed by the growing mountain of gift-wrapped packages, submerged under a deluge of congratulations, including the usual wet kisses and embraces.

I must confess that, at one point, I behaved rather poorly. Jealous of all the attention showered on Robbie, I threw a fit. Father and several uncles had all they could do to reassure me that this was Robbie's day and that mine would come in three years. I composed myself, feeling ashamed, and all was quickly forgotten. I was put in charge of keeping an eye on Bubi the parakeet—a gift from two of his classmates.

Almost the entire family was there and would later stay for a family dinner after the other guests had departed. There was Uncle Karl with his perennial cigar, Father's oldest brother, and his wife Aunt Regina who originally came from Strasbourg. Both were quite jolly, and I have many good recollections about them, especially in the years to come.

Cousin Irene was their oldest, followed by Erik, Heinz, and Rolf. Heinz, eight or ten years older than I, was my favorite cousin and I worshipped him. Whenever I had a birthday, and Mother would ask me whom I wanted to invite, Heinz topped the list. Year after year she patiently explained that Heinz was much too old to come to my party, but I would have none of it. Good as he was, he always showed up for a few minutes, and I was happy. Cousin Rolf, Freddie's age, blond and freckled, a typical Hitler Youth face, was no longer in Leipzig. He had gone off to the Netherlands to *Aliyah*, a training camp in preparation for going to Palestine. Two years later, the Germans caught up with him in the Netherlands, and he disappeared without a trace; Erik was also gone, having left for Bucharest for reasons I did not know about and was trapped there throughout the entire war, having married a

In Germany, around 1922. Aunt Alice, Mother, Tatschi.

local girl. We were to see him again with his family, years after the war, but his end too was a tragic one.

Then there was Uncle Max. A giant of a man, he was nicknamed "Big Max" to distinguish him from another "Little Max," Mother's diminutive brother from Berlin. Big Max was a very congenial, jolly man with a wife to match, Aunt Annie, a large, ample lady with a vast smile. They had four girls. Cousin Rose the eldest, born in New York, had left for Palestine several years earlier. Hilde, the second oldest and an inveterate Zionist, Freddie's age, had followed her there only recently. That left two girl cousins, Ellen and Marion who were of Robbie's and my ages. We went to the same kindergarten and birthday parties and the relationship was close. So close, in fact, that one afternoon, while Aunt Annie was visiting Mother's weekly bridge circle, Marion and I were "playing doctor" in our room when we were surprised by the adults and caught hell!

Then there was Uncle Sale, father's business partner. While the brothers apparently got along well, Mother and Aunt Regina could hardly conceal their dislike for his wife, Aunt Alice, a gaunt, austere woman of little humor, sharp-tongued and quarrelsome, who caused repeated interfamily problems. Swiss-born, with a Swiss passport, she

would frequently remind everyone willing to listen that "she could leave anytime she chose and go home to Bern." We didn't like her and hardly ever had the opportunity to see and play with those cousins, Vera, Freddie's age, and Ralph, a year younger than me. Besides, those two had been in boarding schools in Lausanne, Switzerland, for some time already. Many years later we were to confirm what had been suspected all along, that the relationship between Alice and her children was a very poor one, and the children bore the brunt.

Living close by was Uncle Rudolph, Aunt Regina's brother-in-law, married to her sister Adele, and their sons Lutz and Rolf and daughter Helga. They were a quiet, retiring group and we saw little of them other than at holidays and family get-togethers, except for Uncle Rudolph who played pinochle once a week with Father, Sale, and Karl, games that rotated in their homes. We children, who liked gentle Uncle Rudolph, once participated in a uproarious prank Father conceived. It seems that Rudolph had some medical problem at the time, and his physician had directed him to eat several cloves of fresh garlic each day. The brothers teased him good-naturedly during those pinochle games, and one afternoon Father, who was expecting to host the game that evening, called us together and confided that he wanted to play a joke on Uncle Rudolph. He instructed us to gather white fabric, large marmalade jar tops, scissors, glue, and rubber bands. Soon we had fashioned reasonable facsimiles of three gas masks which Papi and Freddie proceeded to decorate with a fat black pen. At one point in the game that evening the three brothers put on their "masks," and barely able to conceal their amusement faced Rudolph across the game table. At first dumbfounded, he soon exploded into laughter with the others. We who had helped were allowed to look on discreetly through a crack in the door and barely contained ourselves. Every one of them was to perish without trace in some KZ later.

Mother's brother, Uncle Benny, lived in the apartment above ours with his lovely, charming wife Therese and exceptionally pretty daughter Anita, our cousin. In fact, Anita and Freddie, of the same age, were good buddies and together had developed quite a little strategy to persuade their respective parents to let them indulge their teenage pastime of going to the movies. Anita, upstairs, would innocently approach her mother asking her permission to go to the

movies that evening with Freddie, mentioning, oh, quite by the way, that Aunt Jenny, in the apartment one flight below, had already given Freddie permission to do so. If Freddie "could go," Aunt Therese was hardly in a position to refuse her daughter and agreed she could go with him. Freddie, in turn, played the same little game one floor below with our mother, each mother assuming her sister-in-law had given her respective approval. It took quite some time for the two ladies, playing bridge one afternoon, to discover good-naturedly they had been hoodwinked.

Although all of the men in our family were in the fur business, Benny was a magnate in shoewear. We were lucky. He was not only very entertaining with his dry sense of humor but also had a fine tenor voice and often gave recitals for charities. His family lived in the apartment above us. During summer on Sunday mornings, when we five had breakfast together on the terrace of our parents' bedroom, a little piece of paper stuck to an empty coffee cup would come down dangling on a long string from the apartment above with Benny's scribble "What's good for breakfast today?" Inevitably, an invitational message went back up, we made room for one more, and minutes later a jovial Benny would show up to join us. He always justified this by saying that Therese was still asleep, and he was eager for some coffee.

Benny, Therese, and Anita would all make it to New York in the nick of time, just before September 1939. After years of struggling eighteen hours a day with a run-of-the-mill luncheonette on Third Avenue under the noisy El and a few other miserably tough jobs designed for a man half his age, Benny hit it big, manufacturing millions of children's school bags displaying Mickey Mouse and other characters under license from Walt Disney. Therese died miserably from breast cancer in the fifties, and Anita, still a very handsome woman and now a grandmother, lives in Washington with her husband.

Mother had still more brothers. Leopold, or Poldi, lived in a different part of town. He had lost his first wife and recently remarried who was to be our Aunt Mary. We were fond of them but did not see them too often.

Then there was "Little Max" who, with his wife Hilda from Helsinki and son Norbert, lived in Berlin. He came to visit once or twice a

year, always stayed with us, so we boys had to move together for a few days. We liked this uncle a great deal; he was very amusing and seemingly fond of us. He called us his "cadets," and never failed to bring everyone small presents, which frequently included an ample supply of miniature samples of men's cosmetics from his business. One handful of tubes of Bubisan, a men's hair grooming cream, would get Robbie in hot water in school. He once joyfully smeared greasy Bubisan across the blackboard of his classroom during a recess, and was punished with several hours of solitary confinement, the dreaded "Karzer."

Mother visiting the United States. With her are three brothers (left to right) Benny, his wife Elsie, Mother, Sigi, "Litle Max," his wife Hilda.

Unfortunately we did not see that family very often since they lived in Berlin, so we did not know Hilda or Norbert too well at that time. Only many years later were we to meet again in New York and hear the fascinating tale of Uncle Max's escape from Germany via Helsinki to meet up with Finnish-born Hilda and son Norbert, both of whom had been allowed to leave Germany earlier, as foreigners. The three of them went from Finland to the U.S.S.R., by Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok, from there to Japan, and by ship to New York.

Mother's youngest brother Siegfried or Sigi, a real latecomer in her family, had already moved to Hamburg where he was an apprentice in the Benjamin Verlag, the music publishing house of Mother and Father's best friends, the Schauers. Sigi, young and still single, was

one of the first to leave Germany and emigrate to Buenos Aires, where his brother Poldi was able to join him much later. Sigi, smart and very competent, eventually built a children's book publishing empire in Argentina that today is a major keystone in the Spanish-speaking publishing world, now run by his equally smart and gifted son Roberto. His daughter Susan, in no way less endowed than her sibling, also built herself a fine career.

Mother's only sister Marianne lived in Berlin with her husband, Uncle Bernhard, a movie theater owner. He was another huge, jovial man while she, known in our family as "Tatschi" (thanks to Freddie's earliest childhood efforts at pronouncing her name with the prefix "Tante" or Auntie) was a gentle soul we all were extremely fond of. They were childless. A medically mismanaged pregnancy years earlier had resulted in a stillborn child which almost cost Tatschi her life. From that time on, poor Tatschi was a very frightened person and despite Bernhard's gentle efforts at persuasion was never to consider having children ever again.

Once, when I was just a boy, a business friend of Father's took me on the train with him to Berlin to stay and visit Tatschi and Uncle Bernhard for a few days. The three of us had a grand time, but I was quite a hungry little boy. It seems that Mutti gave Tatschi instructions about what I usually ate at mealtimes. As to breakfast, "a roll with butter and jam would be fine." Poor Tatschi, not experienced with children, took this literally. Bernhard, a very big man, was a good eater, the breakfast table looked scrumptious, and I was ravenous. Nonetheless she would not let me have more than one of those little Berlin rolls known as *Schrippe.* I was very unhappy. A telephone call with Mutti cleared things up fast. These good people also left Germany, but early, in 1935, and went to São Paulo, Brazil.

One other quasi member of the family was always present, "Uncle" Felix. A long-term bachelor friend from Mother's and Benny's childhood days, he drove his own automobile (quite rare) and was a permanent and popular fixture in our family. We grew up with him around and accepted him as uncle. A one-time partner of Benny's in their early shoe business together, he told a story about himself that fascinated us children. Felix, on the Austro-Italian front in World War I during the battle at the Isonzo, which earned him an Iron Cross, was

pinned down in a wet and icy dugout for days on end. When they found him and brought him to a field hospital, his legs were frozen. Semiconscious, as he was stretched out on a table with army doctors peering at him from all sides, he overheard them agreeing among themselves that both legs had to be amputated. Wounded, near exhaustion, almost dead, Felix managed to get himself up on his elbows and resolutely challenge the surgeons with a firm "both legs will stay on." He kept his legs and for the rest of his life was able to walk with some slight help from a cane. He too was able to emigrate, taking his very old father with him to Johannesburg, where he built a local empire for Hoover vacuum cleaners. Felix never married. Thirty years later I met him again at the Plaza Hotel in New York, and the intervening years and the age difference were wiped away while we sipped a few Scotches in his room and reminisced about earlier days. He died several years later in a car crash in Johannesburg.

And, of course, there was Grandfather, mother's father whom we all called Opa; an imposing figure of a man, tall, bald, always enveloped in a cloud of cigar smoke. Like all grandfathers he insisted on kissing his grandchildren, but his beard and especially his bristly mustache scratched our faces, and we always tried to escape. He was born in Minsk, and his age was always a mystery. He kept insisting that they didn't keep very good records in Russia in those days. To us he was ancient then, but he and his second wife Flora, one of our favorite people, were to live many more years.

Grandmother Fanny, father's mother, was a widow, his father having died before I was born. She was a wonderful, gentle old lady, ample, white-haired, well coiffed, always dressed in black, and we loved her dearly. She was often at our house, hard though it was for her to move around with her ever-present cane. Whenever we'd go to her apartment ten minutes away at Nordplatz 3 to visit, with or without our parents, she was the true grandmother: quiet, affectionate, keen eyed, always a treat for us at the ready. And she smartly maintained an excellent relationship not only with all her sons but her daughters-in-law as well. As old as she was, she was to perish in Paris, all alone, in a hospital, during the German occupation.

So much for our family in Leipzig at that time. Most of them were

at Robbie's Bar Mitzvah, and they were a wonderful group. That occasion was the last time we would see many of them, but we shall meet a few again later on, thanks to Father's efforts to snatch them out of Germany at the last minute before the Holocaust struck.

And how did all these very nice, above average Jewish Germans of the 20th century come to live in Leipzig? What brought them there? What is the history of the Jews of Germany, or more specifically, those of Leipzig?

There have been Jews in Saxony as far back as the year 1000 A.D. They came predominantly from the middle Rhine area, from cities like Trier, Koblenz, Speyer, and Worms where they had already lived for several centuries. Historians, without actual proof, have assumed that they were escaping the persecutions engendered by the Crusades. (As the gathering troops slowly wound their way south to Italy for embarkation to the Holy Land, they plundered and pillaged Jewish inhabitants in the towns along the way.) In Cologne, Jews were already living as free citizens of Rome before the great migration began. Their presence in Leipzig is documented for the first time in a proclamation from the year 1248 by the Saxon King Henry the Gracious. In short order Jews are pressured to become moneylenders, since the nobility was always in need of cash and the Church forbade Christians to lend money for interest. Conveniently, the official interest rates allowed to the Jews is also taxed heavily, in direct proportion to the rates. In the thirteenth century, Leipzig goes through a phase of tolerance. In 1268 Margrave Dietrich von Landsberg officially proclaims that "no one doing business in the city of Leipzig, regardless of who and wherefrom they might be, shall be importuned or hindered in their pursuits." It is probably good business sense that motivates the Margrave. At any rate no persecution of Jews took place in Leipzig during that period. But in the following century all that was to change. In 1350, *Vogel's Annals*, a well known chronicle of the time, provides a clue. A vast, merciless pestilence called the Black Death ravages Europe, killing millions. Rumors sweep across the continent: The Jews had poisoned all wells and springs in order to kill Christians. (The Jews die of the pest just as miserably as everyone else but that does not concern the populace.) The "guilty" had been found, Vogel

chronicles, and large numbers of Jews are slaughtered in a mindless wave of violence. But despite such pogroms, Jews continue to live in Leipzig.

In 1352 a Jewish school, already then called a Judenschule, is mentioned. In 1359 there is a *Judengasse* (ghetto) and a walled-in quarter. Germans no longer want to live side-by-side with Jews as in the early middle ages, but force them into an enclosure. Any Jew wishing to take up residence in the town must pay the Regent an admission fee to this ghetto. A document from 1364 shows that two Jews, Samson and Aaron, each paid Margrave Friedrich 60 guilders to be admitted. In exchange, the ruler and the town promise protection both to themselves and their possessions. Furthermore, such town residents are permitted to maintain a place of prayer, or synagogue, in their district. The Regent is quite sympathetic to the presence of Jews since they contribute much to commerce and trade. They appear to be well represented during fairs and are, according to Vogel's annals, suitably "exploited" by heavy taxation.

Eventually, in 1664, the Jews doing business at the fair, the historic forerunner of today's internationally attended annual Leipziger Messe, petition the ruler, the Elector, for equal rights and privileges with Gentile traders. This is granted, however Jewish taxes and duties are set at twice the rate of others. The Town Council of Leipzig grants them some abatement, but this is short-lived. In October 1682, Elector Johann George III chronicles very strict and heavy taxation schedules for the Jews as well as narrow regulation of their comings and goings. They had to produce a good conduct and "honesty" certificate from their previous lord of the land. They were not allowed to live within the walls of the city. Every time a Jew entered through the town gate, he had to fill out a form, giving name, place of residence, reason for entering the city, and under penalty of 20 Taler was required to pay his "safety fee" at the *Rathaus*, the town hall, within twenty-four hours of arrival. A whole series of additional regulations are so imposed. Despite these willful and profitable restrictions, further repressive measures are instituted against Jews as time progresses. In 1687 Jews are prohibited from maintaining merchandise stalls open to the street, or doing business on Sundays and holidays. Despite all this chicanery many Jews attend the Easter and St.Michael's Fairs. By 1695 there are

between 450 and 500 Jews at each of these. Countermanding the orders of the town council, the lord of the land respects the petition of the Jewish traders and makes their lives somewhat easier, prompting immediate protest from the Gentile traders who see themselves "threatened." There ensues a lengthy dispute and animosity between the Gentile traders and town council on the one hand, and the lord of the land on the other. It is to last almost a century. The town council evidences its anti-Semitic attitude by an "official proclamation to prohibit the useless Jewpack from further presence in this city." Leipzig's traders follow suit and proclaim: "The Jewish garbage, instead of our long desire for their extermination, keeps spreading ever more." This was more than clerical anti-Semitism promoting hatred of Jews as "pertaining to the Christ killers." This was crass business competition at its worst, and envy of the hard-working Jewish traders, probably a little sharper than themselves.

The growing international commerce in Leipzig is soon evident by the transactions recorded in the fur and animal bristle trade, promoted by Russian and Polish Jews. The fur trade fairs that take place in Leipzig become the continent's central fur market. The area on which it is conducted is given the name Brühl (swamp), assigned to them as being just good enough.

During the second half of the eighteenth century the emancipation of the Jews becomes ever more evident through progressive scientists, artists, and politicians who become actively known. In Germany, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a friend of Moses Mendelssohn, becomes widely known for his play *Nathan the Wise*, which clearly sets the tone for a new, more positive view of the Jews. Mendelssohn himself achieved a greatly improved reputation for Jews by showing how they contribute to European culture. As a prime exponent of enlightenment, this major Jewish philosopher and writer has contributed much. He is of course the grandfather of composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, founder of the Leipzig Conservatory, the first in Germany.

In 1772, for the first time in Leipzig, facilities are extended to Jewish traders coming to the fairs from other countries. Buyers from Russia, Poland, Hungary are relieved from paying the personal protection fee, and their tariffs and duties, heretofore higher, now match

those of the Gentile traders. The French revolution also brings improvement to the lot of Europe's Jews.

Of course, there are periodic excesses. A book dating to 1799 tells of the Jews on the Brühl being "kicked, pushed, abused, vilified." But the march of progress cannot be stopped. Jewish life in the city improves considerably, as Jewish religious services can now officially be held in an auditorium at the university as well as in a tailor's home in the Fleischergasse. In 1810 Polish Jews are permitted to conduct business in Leipzig outside the fairs. Slowly, a Jewish community takes shape. The yellow (in the Middle Ages yellow was the color of shame and dishonor) cloth patch they were once required to wear is no more. The Jews of Leipzig must have felt that a new, better age was dawning for them.

In 1815 the town council grants a long-standing wish for the establishment of a Jewish cemetery. Until then, foreign as well as Leipzig Jews had to be buried in the Jewish cemeteries of Dessau and Naumburg. The new cemetery was in use until 1864. In 1925 one Paul Benndorf writes in the *Leipziger Kalender* of "how peaceful and beautiful and lovingly tended, albeit unknown to most, it was located in the Johannisthal, not far from the hustle and bustle of the big city." It no longer exists today. A new one was created in 1864 on the Berliner Strasse, still there today. Since 1920, another cemetery in Wiederitzsch on the DSF road is in use.

In 1833 Saxony gets a constitution. Jews plead for equal citizen rights. Finally, in 1837 they are granted the right to found a religious community; one year later they officially become permanent residents and yet another year passes until the first Jew of Leipzig, one Salomon Veith, is granted full citizen privileges. Leipzig has 45,516 inhabitants of whom 162 are Jews. In 1855 the new synagogue is consecrated in the Gottschedstrasse, corner Zentralstrasse; it was designed by Otto Simonsohn, a student of architect Semper, and the ceremony includes even singers from the famous Thomas church, although there are no Protestant clergy present.

So where do these Jews who came to Leipzig in the second half of the nineteenth century come from? To a small degree from Jewish communities already in existence elsewhere in Germany. But the majority, by 1870 two thirds of all community members, originated in

eastern Russia, Poland, Galicia. In short order, Leipzig becomes a center for immigrants. In the early days of the twentieth century Leipzig can count over 6,000 Jewish citizens. Russian Jews came predominantly while fleeing the pogroms of the czarist rulers. (The word *pogrom* itself is Russian, meaning "massacre.") Leipzig sees an influx of wealthy Russian fur traders as well as miserably poor villagers from Galicia. Jews are not a nation per se, but members of all classes from all economic levels. Rich and poor, with all inherent conflicts and contradictions. Their desire is to assimilate in their new country, whereas, in their religious mentality and customs, many cling to the ways of their former lives. Accordingly, as many as twenty synagogues, often no more than prayer rooms, are established. People from the same former neighborhood tend to congregate together.

A vital cornerstone of the Jewish religion is the selfless promotion of welfare. Foundations are created to ameliorate the plight of the needy. By the beginning of World War I there are forty-eight with a total funding of one million marks, for its time a very large sum. Assistance is given to all, from the promising but poor students to eastern Jews passing through to elsewhere. The Marcus Harmelin Foundation grants travel stipends to Leipzig's civil servants, traders, and employees of the fur trade, all without regard to race or religion. The Mendelssohn Foundation aids students in Leipzig's universities. A children's reconvalescent home, Solbad Dürrenberg, is created. Also a dining hall, day care center, kindergarten, two Jewish libraries, one Jewish youth home. Ten youth and sport associations are called to life. The former Bar Kochba sport stadium on the Delitscher Landstrasse road still exists. (The author, his brothers, and friends were all members of Bar Kochba and competed fiercely in the annual games. Brother Freddie was a medal winning shotputter and spear thrower. Brother Robbie and the author were periodic champions in their age class in the 100 meter and 400 meter relay races. All were good in Greco-Roman wrestling.)

But the increased immigration also brings out the anti-Semites. The *Literary Leipzig* of 1897 lists four publishing houses in the city whose program clearly and openly list anti-Semitic publications. There are various tabloids which "represent the interests of the anti-Semitic

movement." Nationalism and chauvinism are characteristic of Germans loyal to the Kaiser .

Many of the recent eastern arrivals work at menial tasks. They move merchandise around the city on hand-pulled open carts; they are traveling salesmen and door-to-door salesmen. Every Monday morning at five there is great bustle in the Hauptbahnhof, the large railroad station, when these people start their weekly "tours." In all kinds of weather, winter or summer, they cover the small towns and villages, hoping for better times and dreaming of a little store in the city. Contrary to most other German cities and towns Leipzig has a proletariat well before World War I. There are observant Orthodox Jews, and there is a group of young Jewish Marxists.

Center of the Jewish trade is the Brühl, which had become the world's most vital hub for the fur trade. Eventually, the Brühl had two "Kings of the Fur Trade," whose commercial enterprise, competence, and farsightedness became a legend in the business. Chaim Eitingon, who came from Sklov, Russia, arrived in Leipzig before the turn of the century. The other is Julius Ariovich from Slonim. In 1928, Eitingon built the Eitingon Foundation's Jewish Hospital, a nonsectarian, then most modern facility, its doors open to all (today a city hospital for women). In 1931 Ariovich founded the Ariovich Home for the Aged in the Auenstrasse, today still in service for the same purpose. The Eitingon Corporation, in the years 1926–28, recorded an annual gross of 25 million Reichsmarks and accordingly is the leading fur trade establishment in all Germany. But the Jews on the Brühl are predominantly not owners of large establishments—the majority earn their livelihood as workers and employees in the fur industry.

Several significant department stores are developed in Leipzig: Althoff, the Brothers Joske, Held, Kaufhaus Brühl, and Ury. The latter, a low-priced store, becomes popular as a workingman's shopping place. Furthermore, Gentile Leipzigers like to work for such establishments as the workweek, because of the Sabbath, comes to an end on Friday evenings, not resuming until Monday morning.

In 1913 a long-term dream of the city's Jewish citizens comes to fruition: In the Gustav Adolf Strasse 7 the Höhere Israelitische Schule, a *Gymnasium* (high school/junior college), opens it doors. Its director becomes the respected Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Carlebach; its curriculum,

in addition to a modern education, includes courses in religion. The non-Jewish faculty members come predominantly from the Social Democrats. The school soon becomes recognized as one of the finest in the city as well as all of Saxony. Not only is its educational achievement very high, it also produces several medal winners in sports. (As of early 1938 the author, his brothers, and cousins as well as all other Jewish youngsters of Leipzig attended this school). The school's location had not been selected by happenstance. Many Leipzig Jews live in the area between Gerberstrasse and Waldplatz, later expanded into the Nordplatz-Gohlis-Berlinerstrasse neighborhoods. The poorest live largely in the Gerberstrasse in old houses, often above horse barns and warehouses. There are many Jewish owned small food stores displaying the Hebraic sign for "kosher" along the Rannstädter Steinweg (in DDR days the Rosa Luxemburgstrasse, today the Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn Allee) and in the Nordstrasse.

As the emancipation of Germany's Jews progresses during the nineteenth century, so in Leipzig too there are milestones of individual achievement. In 1839, for the first time ever in Germany, a Jewish Professor, Julius Fürst, becomes a member of the faculty of the University of Leipzig. He is also the publisher of the periodical *The Orient*, reports, studies, essays, and critique of Jewish history and literature. Other outstanding scientists join him at the University's faculty in due course: Prof. Issa Kahan, chairing the studies of post-biblical Jewish literature, the respected Goethe researcher and Germanistic studies expert George Wittkowski as extraordinary professor for German literature, and as professor for Egyptology, the renowned Georg Steindorff. The two latter remain members of the university until 1933. In the arts, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's work is, of course, recognized worldwide. Gustav Mahler started his career as conductor in Leipzig. So did Kurt Weil as composer of modern operas. Angelo Neumann and Gustav Brecher were meritorious directors of the Leipzig Opera. Eduard von Simson, from 1891 to 1897, is the first president of the Federal Superior Court in Leipzig.

In 1898 the first business administration school in Germany is established. It is traced back directly to the initiative of *Geheimer Hofrat* Prof. Abraham Adler. The renowned music publisher Henri Hinrichsen in 1911 endows a substantial fund to enable Henriette

Goldschmidt (her husband was a rabbi) to commence her social-pedagogic seminars for women. It leads to the establishment of the first women's college in Germany. Henriette Goldschmidt is the chairwoman of the Association for Family Education, and achieves significant improvements in the position of women.

Many meritorious Jewish citizens are honored by the city's naming streets after them. Dr. Ing. Phillipp Rosental earned special recognition for the founding of the Leipzig Main Fair Office in 1917, and as Industrialist, achieved the incorporation of the technical fair into the general *Mustermesse*. The Rosental, an attractive city park not unlike Central Park in New York but smaller, was named after him. It is a favorite weekend strolling-in-the-green destination for Leipzig's residents. (In March 1938, Leipzig's NSDAP Party HQ complains to the city administration that "our beautiful Rosental can no longer be enjoyed by the German *Volksgenossen* [fellow countrymen] who are uncomfortable since there are too many Jews there" and requests "that the park be permanently closed to them." The city of course complies promptly, the usual signs are erected and all park benches, save a few in a distant section, are fitted with plaques proclaiming "Not for Jews.")

In the 1920s the Banker Kroch builds the first skyscraper in Leipzig, the Kroch-Haus at the edge of the then Augustusplatz. He also creates a model residential development that bears his name. In 1901 Henri Hinrichsen (he is to perish in the KZ Theresienstadt) endows the city with the Peters Music Library, where 15,000 volumes are made available free of charge for reading and study.

All of these achievements and major contributions are suddenly null and void. To the contrary, the Nazi regime sees in the Jews the incarnation of evil. As they take over the nation in 1933, repressive measures against Jews are promulgated in rapid succession, all designed to humiliate, demean, and dehumanize Jews, strip them of their civil rights and their professions, and ultimately to eliminate them altogether. But very early on, adamant about controlling public information, the Nazis direct their first restrictive measures at Jewish publishers and bookstores and escalate the campaign rapidly. The publisher Seeman breaks with his Jewish business partner, Gustav Kirstein, who must also renounce his chairmanship of the renowned

Leipzig Literary Evenings. The new *Reichsschrifttumkammer*, the Nazi Literature and Publishing Chamber under Dr. Göbbels' Ministry of Propaganda, issues black lists of Jews, thus excluding publishers and booksellers from otherwise mandatory membership. Thus expelled are Joseph Saul Ardel, Fritz Gerhard, and Franz Weg in 1934. Publishers Reuben Eytan (Delphin Press), Ludwig Feuchtwanger (Duncker & Humboldt Press), Kurt Jacoby (Academic Publishing Co.) emigrate early. The days of Jewish publishing houses and booksellers are numbered. Famous Leipzig bookstore landmarks like those of Gustav Engel, Otto Harrasowitz, Gustav Fock, M. W. Kaufmann, (founded 1828, specializing in Jewish Literature), that of Rudolf Schick are all to disappear as early as 1933 and 1934.

And so, all these German citizens lived amidst tension, hatred, intimidation, daily routines including covert and overt dangers, soon enough like prisoners in their own homeland, with only occasional joyous moments like Robbie's Bar Mitzvah, always on guard, uncertain of the future we could not then fathom in our wildest imagination.

CHAPTER 6

Kristallnacht

It was the fall of 1938, after Austria's enthusiastic *Anschluss* in March, and Hitler was riding high. He was already eyeing Czechoslovakia, but his concern of the moment was to provoke Poland about the Polish Corridor. (The Corridor, a product of the Treaty of Versailles, was a narrow strip of land, culminating in the free city of Danzig [Gdansk], which ran between two parts of Germany, and had been allotted to Poland after World War I. It was a perpetual cause of contention between the two countries.) And, of course, as always, to exercise his virulent anti-Semitism. These two objectives found a single fiendish means of execution that fall.

On the morning on October 27, very early, every Jewish family of Polish nationality living in Germany heard a knock on their door. It didn't matter whether they were Polish-born, German-born but considered Polish nationals because their parents were, or just married to a person of Polish nationality. Outside were two policemen or SDs, demanding that the occupants of the home, old, young, women, and children, be dressed and ready in ten minutes to come with them. Only minimal personal belongings and no valuables were allowed. Anxious questions as to what or why went grimly unanswered. As they were escorted out of their homes, the door was sealed, the keys kept by their arresters. "Where are you taking us?" They were soon to find out.

Altogether, according to varying official Police records, between 1,598 and 1,660 Polish Jews were rounded up in Leipzig on that morning. Reichsbahn records, for purposes of fare reimbursement from the State, established the number at 1,563, including 99 children between four and ten. Children under four were not counted, as they traveled free.

At the railroad station, they were pushed into cattle cars (sign of things to come). Entire trainloads of frightened people were transported without food or water to assembly points at the German-

Polish border. Prodded to jump from the cars, they were now driven at bayonet point toward the no-man's land, that narrow strip between the German and the Polish side.

Already in March 1938, the Polish government, in that trading of insults with Germany, announced that the passports of its citizens living abroad for longer than five years, were subject to renewal. The latest brickbat in that exchange occurred on October 6, 1938: Warsaw announced the deadline for Polish passport renewal as October 30. Failure to renew implied loss of Polish citizenship. The Germans saw themselves with a large number of stateless persons on their hands, and it gave Himmler a pretext to order this harassment.

The Poles, now aware that Germany was creating an incident at the cost of their Polish Jews, cynically ordered their border police to stand with their guns and bayonets at the ready and not let anyone cross into Poland. Before them were the Polish bayonets. At their backs the German bayonets. Goebbels called it the *Polenaktion* (Operation Polish citizens), one of Hitler's ways to show his disdain both for Poland and its Jews. It went on for several days. Thousands of hungry, thirsty, dirty, and exhausted people of all ages, terrified for being chased back and forth at gunpoint, desperately huddled in that no-man's-land, without food or water, while diplomats debated in Berlin and Warsaw—and the rest of the world twiddled its thumbs.

The *Polenaktion* was a legally indefensible act, terroristic in nature. Under international law it did not stand up, and the legalistic-minded German leadership knew it. But Germany, while only briefly, had deliberately embarrassed Poland as well as intimidated its Jewish population, to prove it was totally without any civil or legal rights. There is nothing like achieving two policy objectives at once at others' expense. Three days, and it was over, and that was quite sufficient to drive the point home. Everyone was prodded once again pell-mell into freight cars and transported back to Germany. Except that now each cattle car was full of people from dozens of different points of origin all over Germany.

Verein Polnischer Kaufleute und Gewerbetreibender,
Leipzig, Ritterstraße 44 48

Achtung!
Polnische Staatsbürger!

Folgende polnische Staatsangehörigen haben sich unverzüglich beim Polnischen Generalkonsulat in Leipzig zur

Registrierung

mündlich oder schriftlich zu melden

1. alle diejenigen, welche in diesem Jahre 17 oder 18 Jahre alt werden.

[redacted]

Wer die Registrier[redacted]zt sich der Gefahr aus, der polnischen S[redacted]reit verlustig zu gehen.

Registrierungsformulare sind in unserem Sekretariat, Ritterstraße 44,48 zu haben. Auskunft wird ebenda erteilt.

Registrierungsschluß: 31. Oktober 1938. **Der Vorstand.**

Left: Villa Ury, the Polish Consulate General where Polish citizens sought refuge during the Polenaktion in October, 1938.
Right: Announcement by the Association of Polish Merchants of Leipzig warning Polish citizens to report immediately to the Polish Consulate General to register there as citizens. Failure to comply could result in loss of Polish citizenship. Deadline: October 31, 1938.

Since rumors travel fast, there were of course Poles able to anticipate the knock on their doors, and escape the round-up by fleeing to the Polish Consulate General, Villa Ury, in the Wächterstrasse. It was extra-territorial property, and in a peculiar twist of mind, the Nazis did not dare to intervene. Soon the consulate building and its garden held 1,300 extra people, totally overwhelming it. It was raining heavily so a large tent was erected in the garden. A emergency team of Leipzig's Jews was quickly organized to feed and aid these desperate, confused people with the help of Leipzig's Jewish department stores, bakeries, and all manner of other supply needs, not the least of which were portable toilets.

By now all Jewish communities everywhere in Germany were well aware of the plight of these people and organized what assistance they could. At Leipzig's railroad station, train after train arrived and disgorged disoriented people—from Hamburg, from Berlin, from

Karlsruhe—from everywhere. Exhausted, sick, dirty, hungry, and above all, frightened. And not a Reichsmark in their pockets.

Local committees were ready to receive them with food, blankets, medical assistance, and money for tickets to their homes. Almost every adult Jew in Germany, regardless of nationality, stood up to help these Poles, despite the widely held belief that German Jews despised their brothers from the east. Jewish department stores donated blankets, clothing, canned food, porta-potties, medical supplies, and other needed items. Restaurants and food stores provided meals.

Nonetheless it took a few days to sort things out. To Germany's Jews, the whole thing was a stunning shock. There was also subdued outrage, but nothing could be done. They now woke up to the ugly fact that they were prisoners and had waited too long to escape.

November 7, 1938. Paris. Herschel Grynszpan, a crazed seventeen-year-old Polish Jew, enraged by his family's mistreatment and humiliation during the *Polenaktion* walked into the German embassy and shot the first German diplomat he encountered. Unfortunately, the man who had come out to meet him was a young third secretary, Ernst vom Rath, ironically a decent anti-Nazi already shadowed by the Gestapo. Vom Rath is mortally wounded. The Nazi press devotes every inch to this portentous incident. When he dies on November 8, it becomes a made-to-order gift for the Nazis.

In the night of November 9–10 the most widespread pogrom in German history was unleashed. Dr. Goebbels' controlled German press called it a "spontaneous" demonstration by the German people, reacting to the murder in Paris.[1]

Unparalleled anti-Jewish demonstrations broke loose, murder, arson, and pillage, destruction and vandalism of everything Jewish

1 William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960, pages 430–434) describes that night of horror in considerable detail. German documents captured after the war show how "spontaneous" it all was—ordered by Goebbels and painstakingly planned and organized by Reinhard Heydrich, the sinister young number two man in the SS who ran the SD, the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service) and the Gestapo. They are, Shirer writes, "among the most illuminating—and gruesome —secret papers of the prewar Nazi era."

throughout Germany, everywhere and all at once. Synagogues, Jewish homes and stores went up in flames or were broken into by well-organized mobs. The amount of glass shattered during the rioting was of such magnitude that the Nazis gave that night of terror the innocent name of *Kristallnacht* (night of the shattered glass).

Jewish men, women, and children were shot or otherwise murdered while trying to escape death by burning. Some 20,000 Jews were arrested and sent to various *KZ*'s, or concentration camps. The Germans officially admitted to the following incidents: some thirty-six Jews

Die brennende Gro...
Synagoge in der Gottschedstraße

...Seite

Stadtblatt der LZ.

Volkszorn fordert Sühne von Juda

Spontane Protestkundgebungen in Leipzig / Die Synagogen in Flammen

EVENTS OF THE POGROM NIGHT IN LEIPZIG, NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938
The large synagogue in the Gottschedstrasse burning. Popular anger demands revenge. Spontaneous protest demonstrations in Leipzig. The synagogues in flames. (Note the fire engine ladder fully extended, to protect neighboring non-Jewish buildings.)

The Jewish clothing store of Bamberger & Hertz, corner of Goethestrasse and Grimmaische Strasse, the fire set by its owners or their minions, is going up in flames.

killed; another thirty-six seriously injured; countless Jewish women raped, which, in a twist of German justice was considered worse than murder, as it violated the Nürnberg Racial Laws (Party members who merely *murdered* Jews could not be punished). Some 7,500 Jewish shops and businesses were broken into throughout Germany and looted as well as torched . One hundred-nineteen synagogues were set on fire, seventy-six totally destroyed, as reported by Heydrich to Göring on November 11. The ultimate number of murdered Jews is believed to have been several times the official preliminary figure.

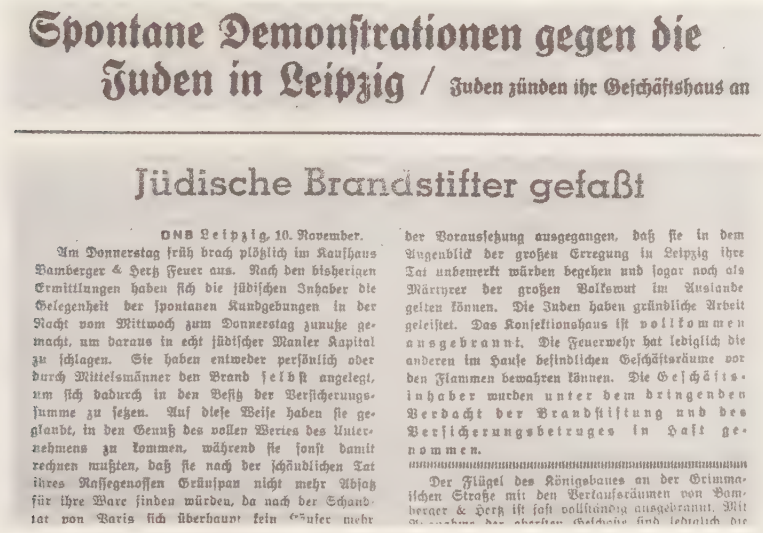
We knew nothing of all of this. The first inkling was a curt, anonymous phone call in the night. Several others followed throughout the night and into dawn, more like warnings not to leave the house. By the time we boys woke up to go to school, Father had been up most of the night agonizing about what was happening out there. Apparently all hell had broken loose. But what exactly? Father decided to stay home. Freddie, then working in Father's business as apprentice, was supposed to arrive early before all the others to unlock the doors, but he felt sick that morning of November 10, and Mother insisted that he not go to work.

Now news of what had happened during the night began to filter through. Our synagogue and most others in Leipzig were burning, as well as a great many Jewish stores, among them Bamberger & Hertz, a city-block wide multistoried clothing store facing the *Augustusplatz.* Torched by Nazi hordes, encouraged with great glee by the SA, they burned to the ground, while the city's fire department engines and their personnel stood by idle, amused and present only, as elsewhere in Germany that day, to protect adjoining non-Jewish property.

We learned that Jews in the streets had been beaten bloody, Jewish businesses looted and ravaged, and store windows smashed. It was still very early morning but everyone was wide awake and tense. We looked to Father tensely sitting by the telephone. He quickly picked up at the first ring, listening in heavy silence. The calls were brief, and he did not know the callers. But each call confirmed the previous ones and added more gruesome details. Uncle Benny, Aunt Therese, and cousin Anita, living above us, arrived to take refuge in our apartment. They, once German citizens, were now stateless. But we were Costa Rican citizens, so we might provide a reasonably safe haven.

Frightened into silence they hid behind curtains every time the telephone rang. When we peeked out the windows at Gohliserstrasse below, we saw mayhem on the street. Gangs roamed about, finding an occasional or suspected Jew and beating them unconscious.

It is now around 08:00 and Herr Süptitz, Father's office manager (*Prokurist*), called and urged Father not to leave home under any circumstances. Greatly agitated he told of all the large storefront windows in the business having been smashed and efforts made to loot. Father was aghast. Suddenly, "Lubbi" Kauber, our friend and sports director at Bar Kochba, blue-eyed and blond, who could pass for a HJ



Spontane Demonſtrationen gegen die Juden in Leipzig / Juden zünden ihr Geſchäftshaus an

Jüdiſche Brandſtifter gefaßt

DNB Leipzig, 10. November.

Am Donnerstag früh brach plötzlich im Kaufhaus Bamberger & Hertz Feuer aus. Nach den bisherigen Ermittlungen haben ſich die jüdiſchen Inhaber die Gelegenheit der ſpontanen Kundgebungen in der Nacht vom Mittwoch zum Donnerstag zunutze gemacht, um daraus in echt jüdiſcher Manier Kapital zu ſchlagen. Sie haben entweder perſönlich oder durch Mittelsmänner den Brand ſelbſt angelegt, um ſich dadurch in den Beſitz der Verſicherungsſumme zu ſetzen. Auf dieſe Weiſe haben ſie geglaubt, in den Genuß des vollen Wertes des Unternehmens zu kommen, während ſie ſonſt damit rechnen mußten, daß ſie nach der ſchändlichen Tat ihres Raſſegenoſſen Grünſpan nicht mehr Abſatz für ihre Ware finden würden, da nach der Schandtat von Paris ſich überhaupt kein Käufer mehr der Vorausſetzung ausgegangen, daß ſie in dem Augenblick der großen Erregung in Leipzig ihre Tat unbemerkt würden begehen und ſogar noch als Märtyrer der großen Volkswut im Auslande gelten können. Die Juden haben gründliche Arbeit geleiſtet. Das Konfektionshaus iſt vollkommen ausgebrannt. Die Feuerwehr hat lediglich die anderen im Hauſe befindlichen Geſchäftsräume vor den Flammen bewahren können. Die Geſchäftsinhaber wurden unter dem dringenden Verdacht der Brandſtiftung und des Verſicherungsbetruges in Haft genommen.

Der Flügel des Königsbaues an der Grimmaiſchen Straße mit den Verkaufsräumen von Bamberger & Hertz iſt faſt vollſtändig ausgebrannt. Mit

THE BIG LIE!

This newspaper article proves how shamelessly the Nazis deceived their nation, and the world!

SPONTANEOUS ANTI-JEWISH DEMONSTRATIONS IN LEIPZIG. JEWS SET THEIR OWN BUSINESS AFIRE

JEWISH ARSONISTS APPREHENDED. Leipzig, November 10, 1938, German News Agency. Follows a cynical article of how the Jewish owners of Bamberger & Hertz, taking advantage of the confusion during the spontaneous public demonstrations in the night from Wednesday to Thursday (November 9 to 10), set their own business in flames, hoping to collect insurance damages. The article compliments the Jewish arsonists for having done a competent job. The entire building (half a city block large) is totally burned out.

anytime, who also worked in Father's business, arrived surreptitiously to hide in our apartment.

Once more the doorbell rang. Everyone who did not belong in the apartment hid behind something. Robby was designated to open the door. It was two middle-aged men in civilian clothes and long leather coats, who flashed their Gestapo badges. Robbie, uneasy, called Papi. The men were coldly polite, and consulting a list, they asked if we had any weapons in the house. Father nodded affirmatively. They have come to confiscate it. Would he please get it? Father went to the bedroom and returned with his Walther 9mm pistol from his night table and handed it to one of the Gestapo, while mentioning that it is

JEWISH BUSINESSES REMAIN CLOSED.

Leipzig, November 10, 1938. By order of the chief of police, to ensure peace and order. Photo of the popular Jewish-owned department store URY, its shattered street-front store windows covered with tarpaulin.

loaded. Both took a fearful step backward before accepting it. They wrote out a receipt and departed with the pistol.

All this time, "Gestapo at the door. . ." was whispered throughout the house. The tension was almost palpable. After they had left, Freddie, always alert, remembered our air rifle. Is an air rifle a weapon? What consequences will our failure to turn it in produce? They talked it over hastily. Dutifully and with iron nerve, Papi telephoned the main police headquarters. No, an air rifle was *not* a weapon.

More doorbell ringing. To everyone's relief it was Mr. Scharff, a very pleasant man who also worked for father and who came to hide. After excitedly relating what he had witnessed in the streets, he suddenly remembered that our passports were still at Police HQ, being readied for a "vacation" to Switzerland. Over Father's protests, Mr. Scharff was adamant about going there at once to check if they're ready, maybe pick them up. By German standards he looked very Jewish and Father beseeched him not to leave the house. With what was happening out on the streets, Scharff would not last two city blocks. Before he could be stopped, he was gone. Father, nervous before, went half crazy with worry.

Several hours later, Mr. Scharff returned unharmed and triumphant. He had taken a taxi both ways. Simple. Grinning from ear to ear, with a sense of having accomplished the impossible, he handed Father the three passports, his, Mother's, and Freddie's, with us two minors listed in hers. All are stamped with Swiss entry visas, German exit permits, and the official foreign currency allowance on a Swiss bank—all ready for leaving the country. A treasure thousands would have given their right eye for at that moment.

That very moment Father made his decision. He said quietly but clearly for all to hear, "We are leaving."

Mother, dismayed and tense, was instructed to pack for all five of us. Consternation on her part. "For how long? What shall I pack? Are we coming back?" she demanded. Father replied curtly "I don't know, just pack!" Methodically and mechanically she went about it in silence, glad to be busy.

Now that a decision had been made, Father got his bearings back. He made some phone calls to the railroad station, reserving a compartment for tonight's train to Lausanne, Switzerland. Oddly enough, there

were no difficulties in all that chaos. He was relieved. Lubbi offered assistance. His blond looks allowed him some immunity in the dangerous streets. Father gave him cash and asked him if he would go downtown and buy a Leica camera with as many accessories as the money would buy. Lubbi was only too glad to do something constructive, took off and returned hours later with it—an item of value that could (and did) come in handy. Herr Süptitz arrived, very solicitous and greatly upset about the chaos in the streets. He and Father retired to the *Herrenzimmer* to talk in private.

As the day wore on we boys were enlisted to help Mother pack. Uncle Benny and his family were still there, frightened, silent, always near a curtain. I shall never forget the terror in their eyes. Less so Scharff and Lubbi who were half-heartedly trying to cheer everyone up, although not very successfully. There were more abrupt anonymous telephone calls that merely whisper "Don't leave the house" and hang up. Father and Herr Süptitz emerged from the study, and as Süptitz left, offering his good-byes to all, he mumbled his apologies for everything that was happening! Cousin Heinz dropped in and brought us more details, more bad news. The afternoon dragged on oppressively. A few friends of our parents came and went, very subdued, quietly talked about the desperate events, said good-bye. More telephone calls. For all of us, prisoners in the apartment, a pieced-together picture emerged. That and the now vituperative Dr. Goebbels on the radio did the rest. Our world had visibly gone mad.

The overall destruction throughout the country was enormous. Within days it would dawn on the Party leadership that the damages would launch an unprecedented number of insurance claims, an economic calamity for the country. But the companies could not refuse to pay without irretrievably ruining the German insurance industry. Hermann Göring was quick to realize the impact this would make. Eager not only to cover the official tracks, but also quick to devise a cynical scheme to get a great deal of money out of it all, he called all major insurance industry representatives to his ministry, and ordered them, over their protests, to honor all claims. But, to pay them directly to the state. Simultaneously, the Ministry of the Interior levied a gigantic fine of millions upon the Jews of Germany for the destruction that had been wrought, terming it as their own doing and threaten-

Der Wortlaut der Verordnungen

Sühneleistung der Juden deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit

Die vom Beauftragten für den Vierjahresplan, Generalfeldmarschall Göring, erlassene Verordnung über eine Sühneleistung der Juden deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit hat folgenden Wortlaut:

Die feindliche Haltung des Weltjudentums gegenüber dem deutschen Volk und Reich, die auch vor feiger Mordtat nicht zurückschreckt, erfordert entschiedene Abwehr und Sühne.

Ich bestimme daher auf Grund der Verordnung zur Durchführung des Vierjahresplanes vom 18. Oktober 1936 (RGB. I, Seite 887):

§ 1. Den Juden deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit in ihrer Gesamtheit wird die Zahlung einer Kontribution von 1 000 000 000 RM. an das Deutsche Reich auferlegt.

§ 2. Die Durchführungsbestimmungen erläßt der Reichsminister der Finanzen im Benehmen mit den beteiligten Reichsministern.

Wiederherstellung des Straßenbildes bei jüdischen Gewerbebetrieben

Die vom Beauftragten für den Vierjahresplan, Generalfeldmarschall Göring, erlassene Verordnung zur Wiederherstellung des Straßenbildes bei jüdischen Gewerbebetrieben hat folgenden Wortlaut:

Auf Grund der Verordnung zur Durchführung des Vierjahresplanes vom 18. Oktober 1936 (RGB. I, Seite 887) verordne ich folgendes:

§ 1. Alle Schäden, welche durch die Empörung des Volkes über die Hetze des internationalen Judentums gegen das nationalsozialistische Deutschland am 8., 9. und 10. November 1938 an jüdischen Gewerbebetrieben und Wohnungen entstanden sind, sind von den jüdischen Inhabern oder jüdischen Gewerbetreibenden sofort zu beseitigen.

§ 2. Die Kosten der Wiederherstellung trägt der Inhaber der betroffenen jüdischen Gewerbebetriebe und Wohnungen.

Versicherungsansprüche von Juden deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit werden namens des Reiches beschlagnahmt.

§ 3. Der Reichswirtschaftsminister wird ermächtigt, im Benehmen mit den zuständigen Reichsministern Durchführungsbestimmungen zu erlassen.

Ausschaltung der Juden aus dem deutschen Wirtschaftsleben

Die Verordnung zur Ausschaltung der Juden aus dem deutschen Wirtschaftsleben, die der Beauftragte für den Vierjahresplan, Generalfeldmarschall Göring erlassen hat, lautet:

Auf Grund der Verordnung zur Durchführung des Vierjahresplanes vom 18. Oktober 1936 (RGBl. I S. 887) wird folgendes verordnet:

§ 1. Juden (§ 5) der ersten Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz vom 14. November 1935 (RGBl. I S. 1331) ist vom 1. Januar 1939 ab der Betrieb von Einzelhandelsverkaufsstellen, Versandgeschäften oder Bestellkontoren sowie der selbständige Betrieb eines Handwerks untersagt.

Ferner ist ihnen mit Wirkung vom gleichen Tage verboten, auf Märkten aller Art, Messen oder Ausstellungen Waren oder gewerbliche Leistungen anzubieten, dafür zu werben oder Bestellungen darauf anzunehmen.

Jüdische Gewerbebetriebe (dritte Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz vom 14. Juni 1938 — RGBl. I, S. 627), die entgegen diesem Verbot geführt werden, sind polizeilich zu schließen.

§ 2. Ein Jude kann vom 1. Januar 1939 ab nicht mehr Betriebsführer im Sinne des Gesetzes zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit vom 20. Januar 1934 (RGBl. I, S. 54) sein.

Ist ein Jude als leitender Angestellter in einem Wirtschaftsunternehmen tätig, so kann ihm mit einer Frist von sechs Wochen gekündigt werden. Mit Ablauf der Kündigungsfrist erlöschen alle Ansprüche des Dienstverpflichteten aus dem gekündigten Vertrage, insbesondere auch Ansprüche auf Versorgungsbezüge und Abfindungen.

§ 3. Ein Jude kann nicht Mitglied einer Genossenschaft sein. Jüdische Mitglieder von Genossenschaften scheiden zum 31. Dezember 1938 aus. Eine besondere Kündigung ist nicht erforderlich.

§ 4. Die zuständigen Reichsminister werden ermächtigt, die zu dieser Verordnung erforderlichen Durchführungsbestimmungen zu erlassen. Sie können Ausnahmen zulassen, soweit diese infolge der Ueberführung eines jüdischen Gewerbebetriebes in nichtjüdischen Besitz zur Liquidation jüdischer Gewerbebetriebe oder in besonderen Fällen

Note the cynicism of holding the victims responsible for the misfortune imposed on them. Also, the fine juridical distinction of imposing the heavy reparations sum only on Jews of German nationality, although all Jewish property, regardless of their owner's nationality, was put to the torch or looted and damaged. The State had only legal control over its own nationals. Also, for the sake of guarding appearances in the international press. Note the orchestrated usage of identical words in all press releases.

DETAILS OF THE DECREE, DEMANDING REPARATIONS FROM THE JEWS OF GERMAN NATIONALITY

Synopsis: Reichsminister and Field Marshal Hermann Göring, plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan, hereby decrees, in view of their inimical attitude toward the Third Reich, the Jews of German nationality shall collectively pay reparations to the state in the sum of one million Marks.

Further, that all damages that resulted from the spontaneous demonstrations by the German people on November 8, 9, and 10, be immediately cleared and repaired by the Jewish owners, at their own expense. All damage payments from insurance claims are confiscated on behalf of the German State.

ing to prosecute thousands for arson. A further edict ordered all owners of fire damaged and vandalized business establishment to clean-up their property immediately, and restore all damages at their own expense. Burned out buildings, especially synagogues, were handed over to demolition and salvage companies, who gleefully and profitably went about their business to eradicate their remnants from the map (Hitler's favorite threat), soon advertising salvaged bricks for sale in the newspapers.

Our train for Switzerland was scheduled to leave *Hauptbahnhof* Leipzig at 22:00. We boys were quietly expectant about everything, including staying up that late. Mother finished packing and had thir-

SA.-Hosen, Parteiabzeichen und Munition in der Synagoge gefunden

Bereits in den späteren Vormittagsstunden setzten überall Aufräumungsarbeiten ein. Die Schaufenster wurden mit Brettern verschalt und die Warenlager sichergestellt. Polizeibeamte sorgten überall für eine reibungslose Abwicklung des Verkehrs, der sich in den Nachmittagsstunden immer mehr steigerte. Inzwischen war man auch aller Brände restlos Herr geworden und es konnte dazu übergegangen werden, die Ruinen gegen Einsturzgefahr zu sichern. Zu diesem Zwecke wurde die Ortsgruppe Leipzig der Technischen Nothilfe unter Leitung von Ortsführer Baurat Pg. Pfeiffer mit etwa 60 Mann eingesetzt.

In einem der Judentempel hat man einen sehr aufschlußreichen Fund gemacht. Hier waren braune SA.-Hosen, Parteiabzeichen und Munition versteckt. Dieser Fund dürfte Beweisstücke dafür liefern, daß von jüdischer Seite beobsichtigt war, Rassegenossen als SA.-Männer zu tarnen und dann irgendwelche Zwischenfälle zu provozieren!

Die Technische Nothilfe arbeitete auf das engste mit der Feuerlöschpolizei und den Leipziger Verkehrsbetrieben zusammen. Es galt insonderheit, hängende Gebäudeteile, bei denen Einsturzgefahr bestand, rechtzeitig abzutragen. Bei der Synagoge an der Gottschedstraße war zu diesem Zwecke eine größere Abteilung eingesetzt, die auch in den Abendstunden im Scheinwerferlicht arbeitete. Starke Stahlseile wurden um Mauerbogen gespannt, ein Oberleitungswagen der Straßenbahn als Zugmaschine benützt und die Gebäudeteile so nach und nach ins Wanken gebracht. Bei dem Judentempel an der Otto-Schill-Straße lag die Gefahr nahe, daß das immer noch glimmende Feuer durch eine Brandmauer auf das Sparkassengebäude sich fortpflanzen könnte. Es wurden darum Balkenlagen freigelegt und Teile der Brandmauer abgetragen. Die Technische Nothilfe konnte außerdem in dieser Synagoge silbernes Tempelgerät und andere Werte sicherstellen.

Alle diese Arbeiten wurden von der Bevölkerung, die sich äußerst diszipliniert verhielt, mit größter Aufmerksamkeit verfolgt. In den Straßen der Innenstadt herrschte in den Abendstunden ein Verkehr, wie man ihn sonst kaum sieht. Zu Tausenden standen die Menschen auf dem Augustusplatz und betrachteten das Werk der Brandstiftung der jüdischen Inhaber der Firma Bamberger & Hertz. Der Verkehr durch die Grimmaische Straße ruhte für die Straßenbahnlinie 6 vollkommen, da diese Linie auch an der Gottschedstraße gefährdet war, hatte man sie über den Hauptbahnhof umgelegt. Um so reger war der Fußgängerverkehr, der bis in die späten Abendstunden anhielt und bei dem man sich davon überzeugte, daß alles getan wird, der Stadt wieder ihr gewohntes Bild zu geben.

Excerpts from the Nazi Press:
SA uniforms, party insignia an
munitions found in the synagog
An absurd, airy news story alleg
the above, without giving the na
and location of the synagogue
question(!) The story speculates
the purpose as obviously design
to enable Jews to impersonate
SA brownshirts in order to
provoke incidents.

teen pieces of luggage now neatly lined up in a row in the long hall, including a portable typewriter and Robby's accordion case. We asked her what she packed. "Don't ask, I don't know!"

Uncle Benny, Aunt Therese, and Anita looked on in silence. We fortunate ones could leave that horror behind, while they and thousands of others like them, stateless citizens now, must stay in Germany. They had been waiting a long time already for their United States quota number to come up. And who knows how much longer it could take? Anything could happen to them in the meantime! They knew it but didn't say it. Their looks told all.

Father called us all together and outlined the plan for going to the railroad station that evening. He will leave with Robby in one taxi. Mother will leave shortly thereafter in another with Freddie. Cousin Heinz will take me a little later. After arriving at the *Hauptbahnhof* we are to wait, separately, at different points inside, quietly, until it is time for us to go through the gate, one at a time, show our tickets, and board the train.

"No signs of mutual recognition, please," Father admonished us. "Do not call attention to yourselves. We are to act as if we don't know each other."

Nervously we waited for the clock to tick the time away. Finally, at 21:00. Father's plan was put into action. Each of the three taxis that came at intervals as arranged, took part of the luggage so that thirteen pieces together wouldn't attract attention. Hauptbahnhof Leipzig, enormous, was buzzing with activity despite the late hour. Lots of brown uniforms and dark green police. We would only come together again on the train. Heinz, only twenty-two at the time, had brazenly bought himself a ticket and insisted on coming along a small part of the way, to Halle station, about thirty-five kilometers away. No wonder he was my idol all those years!

The time had come. After the oppressive waiting, each pair, at seemingly endless intervals warily walked through the gate to the platform and boarded the train. We met in our assigned compartment and there was no conversation. Everyone was unbelievably tense. Father tried to look calm and instill us with confidence, but I think he must have been terribly agitated. Mother was visibly so, got stern looks, was told to compose herself. Freddie, Robbie, and I were quiet, numb.

Finally, the whistle, the steam, the wheels slowly started to move, then roll. We were leaving Leipzig, our birthplace, where we all had spent our lives. Probably forever.

The train pulled into the Halle station. A detachment of police with rifles over their shoulders was standing at ease along the platform just as our train rolled in. Mother's face became ashen. "They've come to get us off the train," she whispered. Nothing of the sort. They didn't even look at the passengers in our train. Heinz must get off here. Visibly overwhelmed by now, he gave us all a last, emotional, farewell and disappeared quickly. I tried to hide my tears. We were his favorite relatives and he my favorite cousin. Who knew what would happen to him and his family in that turmoil? Once more the wheels began to move. A few more brief stops en route. Then, several hours away, the next, the German-Swiss border.

As we rode along, just the five of us in the compartment, Papi tried to reassure us, to keep calm, not to betray any emotion at the border control. "Just act as if we're going on a vacation. That's what the passports say we are doing."

Suddenly, Robby produced out of his coat lining a small glassine envelope. In it the most valuable stamps from his and Freddie's collection; the two had carefully selected them during the day, and he proudly handed them to Father. Great surprise, but not the kind Robbie expected. Father was furious, "This is tantamount to currency smuggling." Punishable by death in the Third Reich. We were startled. Visibly upset, Father acted quickly and made Robbie tuck them back into the coat lining and admonished him and us all to act nonchalant.

The train slowed down, approaching the border. Swastika flags and uniforms were everywhere out there. Keep calm. The train came to a complete stop. Minutes later the compartment door slid open and a "Heil Hitler" flew in our faces. The German passport control. Father handed over our passports, and they were examined closely, the many pages full of visa stamps from years of extensive travel flipped one by one, photos scrutinized, faces examined. The SS officer remarked, "Hmm, Costa Rica, the place where the good coffee comes from." Everyone tried to look out the window nonchalantly, anywhere but at the man in the black uniform with the death's-head insignia. Mother busied herself straightening my coat. I was the littlest, it was her duty

to keep me orderly, whether I liked it or not. Returning the passports, this time another but subdued "Heil Hitler." Clicking his heels he turned and left the compartment, closing the sliding door behind him. As he did so, Mother let out a deep sigh of relief. It's only half out when Father, sitting next to her, surreptitiously rams his elbow into her ribs. The door was then just closing. Did the *SS* officer hear it? Apparently not.

Minutes later, two friendly, nonthreatening Swiss border guards repeated a similar procedure, albeit more cheerfully, and wished us a good vacation. The train rolled slowly forward. A Swiss flag became visible outside the window. The train gathered speed. We had left Germany behind us. Mother and Father were never to return. It was the last heel clicking heard by this family.

CHAPTER 7

In A Railroad Compartment

At this point in the narrative, I ask the reader to pause for a while and turn the clock forward. Not just the clock. The entire calendar. By some fifty years.

As this family, now less tense, allowed themselves to pursue each one his own thoughts, the silence of that train compartment was punctuated only by the clickety-clack of the wheels rolling through the night toward Lausanne and freedom. For now, they were painfully aware of the inexorable process of alienation they had been subjected to in the country of their birth, since it all began a scant five years earlier. They could not possibly imagine in the remotest what dark future they had escaped from.

All they knew for now was that their German friends, schoolmates and teachers, business associates and neighbors had turned against them. An entire people, with whom they had lived all their lives side-by-side in harmony, and shared a common culture with, had come to treat them as *Untermenschen*, despicable vermin. They had seen themselves portrayed in the press as grotesque caricatures, their civil rights systematically curtailed by fiat; had found themselves the targets of attacks, whether by newspapers, films, speeches, newsreels, or radio, the object of blatant lies and outrageous fabrications, as well as physical attacks and abuse, all widely sanctioned. All of that. And then the nightmare of Reichskristallnacht. And now they sat in that train and were carried away from their own country to the unknown.

They could not know then that all of what they had experienced themselves was merely a prelude to a horror yet to be unleashed.

Ultimately, 6 million of Europe's Jewish population were systematically rounded up like cattle, including, in a last gasp of the regime as late as the spring of 1945, exterminated by shooting, starvation, physical abuse, medical experiments, and ultimately gassing and burning in what the Nazi regime established as *Vernichtungslager*.

The extermination camps like Auschwitz/Birkenau, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec, and Chelmno. In addition, other KZ and *Arbeitslager*, small and large, disfigured the European landscape: among them, Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Flossenburg, Ravensbrück (a women's camp), Mauthausen, Gross Rosen, and the unspeakable Bergen Belsen, where skeletal survivors of the last Death March continued to die long after rescue. All of these have entered history as grim testimony to a deliberate, devilishly crafted and technically engineered *Endlösung*, the Final Solution of the Jewish Question as advocated and relentlessly pursued by the Nazi regime.

It must also not be forgotten that in addition to these hapless 6 million Jews, a million or more other *Untermenschen* met a similar fate, merely for being Slavs or enemies of the regime, homosexuals, Gypsies, mentally or physically handicapped, or whoever happened to stand in the way of the *Grossdeutsche Reich* in its relentless pursuit of *Ordnung* and *Lebensraum*. Nor did the Nazis stop there. In their early successful Russian campaign of 1941–42, several million Red Army soldiers taken prisoner of war were liquidated willfully and deliberately, starved or worked to death in forced labor camps against all rules of warfare. Nor did the citizenry of occupied Europe escape. Any number of civilians were shot, hanged, executed at random in retaliation for acts of resistance, rounded up and shipped off to forced labor in the German armament factories. Altogether, studies now show that over 60 million people died as a result of Adolf Hitler having imposed his will on the German people.

Without their support, all this would not have been possible.

But it is the relentless destruction of an entire people, decreed by the Nazi leadership, and embraced by its leading cadres that makes the Nazi era unique in history. Carefully prepared at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin in January 1942 by Reinhard Heydrich, with the concurrence of all German State Ministries represented there, and upon the marshaling of immense resources, almost secretly carried out by the RSHA and SS, it was a plan for torture and murder on an unprecedented scale, given the euphemistic name *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution of the Jewish Question).

In the course of it, Jews were jammed under unspeakable conditions into the *KZ* and into Polish ghettos from where (with greater

priority and to the detriment of front-line military requirements), they were herded by the millions into endless trainloads of cattle cars of the *Reichsbahn*, to be hauled to *Vernichtungslager* in the east. Nothing like that had ever happened in history. How could my family—or any sane person—have envisioned it.

How did all this come to pass? This insane hatred for Jews? How did it start? Robert S. Wistrich, in *Anti-Semitism—The Longest Hatred* (New York; Pantheon, 1992), a disturbing book, writes that it is older than Christianity. Wistrich, a distinguished scholar of history, writes: "It dates back to pagan antiquity and most likely has its roots in the exclusiveness of the faith of the Jews in a world where paganism was the norm. Then as always a minority, it was their stubborn adherence to their monotheistic faith that caused them to be seen as different, as fundamentally alien to their fellow citizens." Continues Wistrich: "Above everything, this rather unique Diasporic nation with their dietary laws, Sabbath observance, prohibition on intermarriage, had set itself apart and seemed to assert for itself a measure of spiritual supremacy over the polytheistic majority. At first sight there would be nothing surprising that such special characteristics and claims would provoke the hostility and resentment as found in the literature of antiquity." (S.D.Cohen, "Anti-Semitism" in Antiquity, The Problem of Definition; David Berger (ed.) *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia, 1986); Hannah Arendt, *Antisemitism*, New York, 1968; Book 5 of *Tacitus' Histories*)

As a matter of fact, this pre-Christian attitude may also be founded, e.g. in the Roman insistence on worship of their emperor—not just on paganism but political consolidation—similar to apotheoses of Hitler, Stalin and other strong men. There are of course countless examples of periodic persecution of Jews in antiquity, and the Hittites, Egyptians, Persians and Babylonians come to mind. But those were wars of conquest, probably over grazing lands, water or political ambitions and exploitation. It all looks remarkably like xenophobic prejudices out of ignorance, exhibited by the lower classes and that have existed between ethno-religious groups during virtually every period of history, and continue, to this day.

Yet, it was left to Christianity to play the major role in this hostility

to Judaism. Not a few early Christians had absorbed their hatred of Jewishness from their pagan upbringing. But it is undeniable that Christianity appeared on the stage of history as the very negation of Judaism and that its theological polemics against Judaism were absolutely vital to its own identity, its survival as a new religion springing, as it did, from Judaism itself. For twenty centuries, Christianity made the accusation that the Jews were literally the "murderers of God," of the man known as Jesus Christ, himself a Jew. Crucifixion was a Roman form of execution and it was a Roman procurator who condemned Christ. But throughout time, Christianity has found it convenient not to propagate that fact of history, so clearly embodied in the very inscription once placed mockingly by the Roman soldiers above the head of the crucified Christ: *INRI* (*Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum*—Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews), since then universally depicted on the Christ on the cross.

"Christianity," Wistrich writes, "has consistently attributed to the Jews a universal, cosmic quality of evil, has equated them as the personification of the devil and in the Middle Ages perpetuated fantasies about Jews as plotting to destroy Christianity, poison wells, massacre Christian children in the performance of their own rites. These peculiarly Christian charges, repeated for centuries, have obviously become deeply embedded in the Western psyche, although of late have found eager adherents in Islam and such secular political religions as Bolshevism and Nazism.

The writings of the Church Fathers made the negation of the Jews' religious and cultural values their central *Leitmotif.* An overwhelmingly negative stereotype of the *deicide people* (God killers) was conveyed through theological writings, sermons by the clergy, folklore, ballads, the arts. The Church-inspired Crusades were ostensibly meant to liberate Jerusalem from the dominance of Islam, but crusaders often committed more wholesale persecution and massacres of Jews throughout Europe, while en route to the Holy Land, than they killed Saracens. As the centuries moved forward, new and even more irrational myths were invented and added, and as Christianity spread among all the peoples of Europe it carried this devastating image with it until it was an integral part of European and Western culture.

We have seen how the Black Death of the fourteenth century,

which decimated the populations of Europe and the Mediterranean basin, was conveniently attributed to the Jews (who died from it like everyone else) as poisoners of the water supply. The Spanish Inquisition, also one of the blackest pages in the generally not very edifying Church's history, persecuted Jews as rigorously as it did those perceived as heretics. It is only one more example of Christian endeavor to perpetuate the myths it had sown so effectively. So much so that, more than anything else, these efforts account for the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism to this day in the public mind.

In the nineteenth century anti-Semitism found ever new proponents, particularly in France, Russia, and Germany. The rise of a literate middle class made the propagation of venom—paranoia, millennial fantasy and sheer political cynicism—an easy task through the printed page.

The presence of Jews in a given country was not even necessary to propagate anti-Semitism or keep it alive. In England, around 1200 A.D. after the mass suicide of York Jews besieged by a fanatical Christian mob, Edward I dictated the expulsion of all of Britain's Jews, out-brutalizing most of Europe in their mistreatment, and setting a precedent for France, Spain, and Germany. As a result, Jews virtually vanished from Britain for nearly 400 years, until their readmission under Oliver Cromwell in mid-seventeenth century. Nevertheless, throughout these four centuries, anti-Jewish prejudices became ingrained in English life through sermons and religious literature. Everyone, Anglicans, Catholics, and Puritans adopted the demonic medieval image of the Jews as a rejected and despised group, the name itself carrying connotations of scorn and contempt. Along with witches, Jews became scapegoats, "agents of the devil." The Church held them up as a physical threat to Christians and Christianity. Yet, for seventeen generations of English life there was not a Jew in sight one could take offense to.

Barred from exercising any elevated occupations in the Middle Ages and for a few centuries following, Jews had no lawful ways left to make a living other than to become lowly laborers, traders, and merchants. Myths notwithstanding, they were among the poorest of the poor, herded into little ghettos. And since usury, specifically the charging of interest on a loan, was officially frowned upon by Chris-

tianity, the vast financial machinations of the Popes notwithstanding (Barbara Tuchman, *The March of Folly*, New York, 1985), Jews were assigned the despicable role of moneylenders. But since money has always been a desirable commodity in human affairs, a number of them prospered and eventually became the banks of the nobility. Everyone of any standing wanted to borrow money, paid the legal interest to do so, and hated himself for having to seek out the Jew to satisfy his cravings. So much so that "To go to the Jews" was a contemptible term for borrowing money. But the mighty princes and rulers of the countries and city states had a penchant for luxury. And quite frequently waged wars on their neighbors. Since wars require soldiers and arms that cost money, large sums were needed. So the princes sought out the Jewish moneylenders, borrowed increasingly larger sums to finance their political ambitions. But it is also customary to pay back the loan. When frequently unsuccessful military adventures failed, the princes, never ones to curtail their own luxuries, found themselves too broke to make repayments. In that case, what easier than to create a little diversion, instigate among the population the always latent hatred of Jews, and presto, a number of them were beaten to death including, by accident, the moneylenders. This nefarious practice persisted well into the Renaissance when finally a body of laws made such practices no longer feasible with total impunity.

Many Christians got around the "usury" charge (at least in England) by borrowing in marks and repaying in pounds—thus paying a 33% interest. The anti-usury laws were not always strictly enforced.

L'Affaire Dreyfus in France in the late nineteenth century was of course a prime example of deeply ingrained anti-Semitism. Maligned, cashiered, and convicted of treason on the basis of forged evidence by a fellow staff officer, Count Esterhazy (not without the connivance of high ranking members of the Army's General Staff), he spent three years on Devil's Island before a campaign by the fiery Emile Zola and others managed to free him.

Is it any surprise then that a poorly educated Adolf Hitler (Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, Berlin, Ullstein Verlag, 1973), coming from very lowly origins in a peasant village, *Braunau*, in upper Austria, a corporal in World War I running dispatches that earned him an Iron Cross, bitterly disappointed for having fought a losing war, conjured up images of

major treason within Germany's postwar political leadership. He held them responsible for signing the victors' harsh Treaty of Versailles, which became his popular "dagger in the back" theory.

Is it any surprise that this Hitler, full of delusions about the world, with a small talent for drawing, (all his pictures of houses, farms, buildings are totally devoid of people) aspires to see himself as an art student in the prestigious Academy of Arts in Vienna which, to his humiliation, rejects his application for admission for inadequate talent. Vienna, that great multicultural capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, teeming with diverse people, an elite of chic officers and wealthy upper crust, he at once admired and despised, and lower classes, all eager to eke out a living in the big city, became Hitler's home at age 18. In its midst, this penniless, untrained, and not exactly eager to work Adolf Hitler, is competing for a livelihood with others, all seemingly with better honed instincts for trade and commerce than his own. His experience must have been rough, but not unusual. It is what he would have faced as an immigrant in New York or any other big American city at that time. So he became an occasional worker. He painted houses. His personal habits undisciplined (until his very end), he stayed up late, slept late. And attended political rallies. The successful people he saw—according to him—were all Jews. He did not view them as people working hard, as achieving, he resented them as exploiters. He saw Jews as dirty, unkempt, strange, different, alien. Old prejudices rose to the surface. He nourished a poisonous hatred that never left him. After the war, he moved to Munich where he got into the midst of great political turmoil. He decided that his own failures and the failures of the Weimar Republic—that noble experiment in democracy only half accepted by the authority enamored Germans—were the fault of the dirty Jews. Here in Munich Hitler discovered his calling: rabble rousing, political haranguing, speechmaking. He was very good at it. He found a nationalistic party in a beer hall and joined it. Soon he outmaneuvered its founder, one Gregor Strasser, too scrupulous for him, who is later found murdered, and took over. It became the *NSDAP*, the *brownshirts.*

But one important detail is now different: His old Vienna-inspired hatred of Jews now has a vehicle for revenge. And he instinctively felt that the downtrodden German nation, like himself losers in a war,

trapped in a depression, unemployed by the millions and truly dejected, would follow a strong man who pointed out their enemies. And point he did. The Jews. Adolf Hitler provided the scapegoat, custom made through the centuries. His hatred fed on necessity and political cynicism. And history was being made. On a grand scale.

Remains to this day, the baffling, as yet unanswered question: How could a great nation with a long and distinguished history and culture allow itself to fall for Adolf Hitler's demagoguery? The crude tirades, the ridiculous posturing, the bully boys he surrounded himself with. Why did the Germans accept this as the image of themselves?

For one thing, Hitler made the Germans feel strong again, manly, competent. And above all, he gave them the same scapegoat he gave himself. Who better than a small minority (500,000 of 60 million), intellectually and economically successful beyond their numbers and thus, unfortunately for themselves, quite visible. Hitler awakened prejudices and paranoia, if at all slumbering, from a millennia of defamation planted by that respectable institution, the Christian church. He gave his vituperative rhetoric an aura of respectability, yet appealed to the nation's basest instincts. As Kurt Schumacher, the social democrat, yelled in 1933 at the Nazis in the Reichstag, "National Socialism is a permanent appeal to the *Schweinehund* in people." And Hitler was eminently successful. It was easy enough to convince people that the Jew was the ruin of Germany. He and Germany could not stand by idly. Together they would crush "the enemy." The nation did not fail him.

It never bothered to reflect that less than 1% of the population could hardly be responsible for all the many ills that beset their country.

There entered the need of all politicians, money. His party required financial support, and Germany's big industrialists were listening. In the NSDAP program proclaimed in his speeches, they could discern, between the lines, a proposed resurgence of German military—and by extension, industrial—might so restricted by the Versailles treaty. It certainly was promising. So the country's industrial barons came to his aid with heavy backing. Foremost among these were of course the *Krupp Steel* interests, whose gun and munitions plants lay fallow.

And that amazing chemical cartel, I.G. Farben. Today known

chiefly as very respectable AGFA, Hoechst, BASF, and Bayer, the once mighty I.G. Farben colossus, in existence since before the turn of the century, was superbly managed, technologically of world eminence, the creator of aniline colors and dyes (hence its name, Industrie Gemeinschaft Farben, meaning Industrial Combine Colors), synthetic nitrogen fertilizer and ultimately its crowning achievement, synthetic fuel and rubber (*Buna*), all produced from cheap, plentiful coal and without which Hitler could never have waged war. So powerful was this corporate empire with its formidable array of patents that it played a leading role in the chemical business of the world. I.G. fortified its commercial leadership by constructing a maze of cartels, admitted and concealed, whose members included such industrial giants (several even larger than I.G. Farben) as Kuhlman of France, Imperial Chemicals Industries (ICI) of Great Britain, Montecatini of Italy, Aussiger Verein of Czechoslovakia, Boruta of Poland, Mitsui of Japan, Standard Oil (New Jersey), DuPont and Dow Chemical of the United States. Through the uncanny talent of its scientists and engineers, it secured the vital self-sufficiency that enabled Germany to maneuver in the world of power politics. From its laboratories and factories flowed the strategic raw materials Germany's own territory could not supply, including the chlorine and mustard gas used so devastatingly in World War I. But I.G. also produced vaccines, sera and invented drugs such as *Salvarsan* (for which its Paul Ehrlich, a Jew, earned a Nobel Prize), *Aspirin, Atabrine* and *Novocaine*, along with *Sulfa* (another Nobel Prize for its scientist Gerhard Domagk), and insecticides (among them infamous Zyklon B), and eventually rocket fuels. Gustav Stresemann, Chancellor and foreign minister during the Weimar Republic once said, "Without I.G. Farben and coal, I have no foreign policy." With I.G. and coal, Adolf Hitler almost conquered the world.

These then were some of the crucial power brokers who, among others, supported Hitler. If they were big to begin with, they became gigantic during the Nazi era. But for I.G. it was at first an uneasy alliance. Hitler despised I.G. for its international complexion and its unusually large number of Jewish directors and scientists. But they needed each other and as ironic as it may appear, the Nazis officially stigmatized I.G. as non-Aryan in the early years of the Third Reich. Industrial interest and political necessities eventually overrode

scruples, and once the board of I.G. had quietly spirited its Jewish directors and scientists out of the country (with generous funds) I.G. could embrace the Nazis more passionately. And Adolf Hitler was on his way. How well it succeeded is written in the history of the world's most violent and mechanized war. For five and a half years, Hitler's tanks, trucks, and planes were propelled by I.G.'s gasoline, their wheels rolled on I.G.'s *Buna* rubber. Success had rendered I.G. indispensable. Its know-how made Germany a super-power. There is more to the story of I.G. Farben than there is room here, but its descent into moral hell finally culminated in a giant industrial complex I.G. chose to build at Monowitz (Auschwitz III), drawn there by the almost limitless reservoir of death camp labor, to produce synthetic rubber and oil (see chapter 17). So enormous was this installation that it used as much electrical power as the entire city of Berlin. More than 25,000 camp inmates paid with their lives just to construct it. It never became operational, having been bombed into rubble by Allied air raids.

Gradually the regime dehumanized the Jews, by stripping them of all their rights, one by one: honor, achievement, liberty, integrity and ultimately, their possessions and assets, cynically to help finance Hitler's own plans for what was to follow. He made it easier for them to be despised. It has always been hard to quantify how much of Germany applauded and participated "hands on" in the systematic vilification of the Jews. But it is no exaggeration to say that most of the nation enthusiastically supported, aided, and abetted it, and that large numbers enjoyed it. The best that can be said for some is that they tried to ignore it, looked the other way. After the war, of course, *all* Germans of that generation pleaded ignorance, claiming they did not know what was happening to their Jewish neighbors. They had personally *neither witnessed nor heard* of how tens of thousands all over the country were dragged out of their homes at all hours and disappeared forever. The fact that desirable apartments and homes so vacated became suddenly available to deserving *Volksgenossen* was accepted without question, and a most sought-after advantageous deal. Their owners, it was said, had moved away. After 1945, when young people asked their parents the proverbial "Where were you during the war?" they walked away with an impatient gesture, in annoyed silence.

Since the exception confirms the rule, it must also be said that there was a tiny, isolated anti-Nazi minority that found the regime abhorrent, and risked their own lives by writing and disseminating the truth, organizing in secret resistance circles, and by hiding or helping Jews. Not to forget the heroic young Hans and Sophie Scholl brother and sister pair, who printed and amateurishly distributed idealistic anti-Nazi leaflets at Munich University until the Gestapo found the entire group and sent them to the guillotine. All their names belong today in the small Pantheon of German Honor. But until much later, that was all. The population was squarely behind Hitler.

How about the people who actually carried out the orders? The Waffen SS *Einsatzgruppen*, the forerunners of the *Vernichtungslager*, followed on the heels of the advancing Wehrmacht to murder thousands by carbon monoxide in specially constructed death vans, or machine-gunned hundreds of thousands throughout eastern Europe at the express orders of Reichsführer SS Himmler. The SS *KZ* guards who brutally beat, shot, or hanged inmates without reason, tore children from the arms of mothers, conducted pseudo-scientific "medical" experiments on live prisoners, carried out the infamous *Selektion* upon the newly arrived cattle-car trainloads to the tune of Viennese waltzes: Those who looked strong enough to work were sent to one side, whereas the weak, the elderly, and most women and children were immediately marched off with soothing, comforting words to the official "delousing" in the *Brausebad*, the gushing showers that promised some cleanliness but instead of water dispensed Zyklon B. And operated twenty-four hours a day.

There is considerable evidence that much of that "work" was carried out dispassionately, very *Ordnungsgemäss* (in orderly fashion), without feelings one way or the other. The day shift spent its evenings eating, drinking, and lightheartedly relaxing with female guards or still attractive woman prisoners. One day like any other. Who were such people? Ordinary Germans, one-time mechanics, farmers, carpenters or painters, who apparently had been so indoctrinated, so emotionally anesthetized by the systematic dehumanization of their victims that it all seemed perfectly normal. Not that there were not a substantial number of very well educated, well bred SS officers among them. Apparently, many were able to compartmentalize their lives—play an im-

peccable Bach or Beethoven on the barracks' piano in the evening, and next morning order inmates to be hanged, beaten, carted off to heavy labor in a nearby quarry until they collapsed, or attempt to find more efficient methods to increase the killing ratio in the gas chambers. When the conquering Allied armies liberated the death camps at the end of the war, and the world saw for the first time the multimillion horror, none of their captured German guards displayed any remorse.

Those who are left over today, after carefully disappearing before the very end, lay low for decades before resuming ordinary lives within Germany. When turned over to the postwar German government by the Allies, accompanied by plentiful proof of their infamy, they were mostly released. Adolf Eichmann, the very architect of the efficient transportation network that carried the millions to their death escaped to Argentina with the help of the Vatican. Today, there is not a living ex-Nazi Party member to be found in all of Germany. Ex-post facto, all of Germany expressed surprise and horror, *none of them knew anything.* Anyone of that generation, who obviously was in some uniform during those years, will never fail to explain that he was merely a soldier drafted into the services, obeying orders.

In this connection, one cannot discount the German's long history with order and obedience. During the sixteenth century peasants' revolt, Martin Luther himself denounced the rebels for their disobedience to authority. And there are all those tales of Communist demonstrations breaking up because the demonstrators wouldn't disobey "Keep off the grass" signs.

As for the Wehrmacht, of the largely aristocratic military command structure many went to great lengths trying to disassociate themselves and their troops from the massacres that went on daily. They were not entirely successful and their protestations of ignorance, expressed with an "Oh, that was the political army" when atrocities are mentioned, lack credibility. Recent voluminous research done on the subject in Germany itself, by German scholars and historians, and the massive German war documents that survived, now available at the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz lead the researcher to the inescapable truth. Including the fact that Hitler regularly bribed his top general officers with vast land holdings conquered in the east, to become their fiefdoms once the

war had been won. Great shades of medieval days. The amazing fact is, of course, that this brilliant, urbane officer corps accepted these transparent maneuvers, proffered by the corporal so many of them quietly despised, willingly and eagerly, further cementing their fealty to his person.

The Wehrmacht itself, especially in its *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of extermination) on the eastern front, routinely indoctrinated its troops in the objectives and racial theories of the Nazi regime. The enemy was presented as the barbaric Jewish/Bolshevik conspiracy threatening Europe. So much so that ordinary German soldiers, from day one of Operation Barbarossa, actively and willingly engaged in massacres, pillage, looting, and arson throughout the savage Russian campaign. It became their Crusade. The ferocious attack on the U.S.S.R. in June 1941 was uniformly seen by the troops as a defensive action. Millions of German troops were convinced of the holiness of their mission on behalf of the Führer and European culture. Their perceptions are well evidenced by thousands of front line letters to their families, diaries, and other documents. This persisted well into the very end, despite the incredible manpower losses sustained on the eastern front, ultimately totaling almost six million casualties, close to three times the initial number of formations that initiated Operation Barbarossa.

The brutal character of the campaign and the iron discipline enforced by the Wehrmacht's system of military justice, which executed almost 15,000 of its own soldiers during the war for the slightest deviation from discipline, desensitized the troops. Nazi ideology on the one hand and fear of their superiors on the other became the binding force that kept them fighting so tenaciously. As one heard during the Nürnberg War Crimes Trials, orders were orders. Regrettably, the generals of the *OKH* and *OKW*, despite all they knew, took their personal oath of loyalty to the Führer seriously. It was a matter of honor, they said. It took until July 20, 1944 before a handful of military conspirators finally saw the light to set in motion *Walküre* (Valkyrie), the planned attempt on Hitler's life at his Command HQ in Rastenburg, East Prussia, the Wolf's Lair. Carried out by the heroic Col. Klaus Graf von Stauffenberg, the bomb he planted failed to kill Hitler by the merest thread of misfortune. His fellow conspirators, among them the OKW's Gen. Ludwig Beck and Mayor Karl Goerdeler of Leipzig, in-

cluding many remotely suspected, were quickly arrested and "tried" by the *Volksgericht* (People's Court) of infamous Nazi judge Roland Freisler and hanged on meat hooks. Hitler insisted a filmed record be made by the SS of these executions, which he later watched with satisfaction. But the ordinary members of the military, carrying out wholesale orders to execute hostages, prisoners of war, Jews, and other civilians during the campaign in Russia, although less so in the occupation years of Europe, hardly deserve the benign label of slogging professional soldiers doing their duty. History, here too, has now become much clearer.

Finally, who were the leaders under Hitler, the party cadre who so efficiently turned his malevolent intent into grim reality. Very small, ordinary men for the most part. Wearing resplendent uniforms, they legitimized their government's foul deeds while ruling over the lives and deaths of millions. Whether it was running the Gestapo, being Gauleiters, the heads of occupied territories, publishers of pornographic anti-Semitic rags, or in charge of recruiting forced labor.

Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a not too bright but arrogant one-time champagne salesman. Nürnberg Gauleiter Julius Streicher, publisher of the virulently anti-Semitic *Der Stürmer*, an exceptionally vile, ordinary man of obscure, if any, credentials. One of the worst of them, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, head of the infamous SS and Gestapo, a former chicken farmer and a methodical, one-time small-town schoolteacher. Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring, popular because of his jovial humor, had been an ace fighter pilot in the Richthofen squadron of World War I. Greedy, self-aggrandizing advocate of the good life, he reveled in resplendent, bemedaled uniforms (the butt of many jokes in Germany). Early in the war he boasted in a speech that if ever an enemy bomber violated German airspace, his name would no longer be Göring but "Meyer." (Toward the end of the war, when the Allies were bombing Germany night and day, many Germans did refer to him as Herr Meyer.) He was perhaps the greatest thief of fine art ever, and his teams scoured Germany and occupied Europe for valuable paintings in museums and private hands to be summarily confiscated and shipped back to Germany to Göring's "collection." Only a handful were ever recovered and returned after the war. He was also a drug addict. Wily, power hungry, he was con-

stantly at odds with SS Chief Himmler, both maneuvering with Hitler for more turf to rule over. Author of the original, deliberately obscure order to Reinhard Heydrich to implement the *Endlösung* at the Wannsee Conference in 1942, Göring was tried and sentenced to death at Nürnberg, but managed to commit suicide on the eve of his hanging.

Unquestionably, the most intelligent if malevolent of the top Nazi leadership was little club-footed Dr. Joseph Goebbels, chief of the Ministry of Propaganda and *Volksaufklärung* (People's Enlightenment), who ruled with an iron hand over all of Germany's press, radio, book publishing and films. The product of a classical Jesuit education, he was, despite his deformity, notorious for his unrelenting womanizing among film stars and other attractive ladies. Any one who refused his advances could be certain of his undying enmity, which could be formidable, given his unlimited powers to make or break careers and lives. That brilliant master at filmmaking, director/editor Leni Riefenstahl, much maligned for once reluctantly acceding to Hitler's insistence she make a film of the 1935 Nürnberg Nazi Party rally, which resulted in the stylistically superb *Triumph of the Will*, subsequently widely used by the regime as a documentary for propaganda purposes, found herself the target of Goebbels' unrelenting pursuit. She rebuffed him, and he would never let her forget it, especially during the making of her other masterpiece, the 1936 *Olympiad.*

An excellent public speaker, Goebbels, like Hitler himself, had an uncanny feel for what the audience wanted to hear and gave it to them. But his speeches were brimming with abusive contempt and insolence, dripping with cynicism for Germany's enemies, perceived and real. Both he and Hitler were masters of the big lie. Hitler had confided once that "the bigger the lie the more believable it became." Both were imperious practitioners of the art. Goebbels remained loyal to the Führer till the end, killing himself, his wife, and six small children (whose names all began with an H) in the Berlin Führerbunker.

Borman, Sauckel, Frank, Hess, Eichmann, Ley, Seyss-Inquart, Kaltenbrunner, Mueller, Rosenberg—all of the same ilk. There was only one who stood out as an exception in intelligence and relative decency: architect, engineer and later minister for war production, Albert Speer who, at Hitler's orders did use slave labor in Germany's armament factories, but nevertheless had a late awakening of his con-

science. Author of two illuminating postwar books written while in jail at Spandau, he gives us an insight into the Nazi hierarchy and Hitler's private life. In his first book, *Inside the Third Reich*, he states that he argued against using slave labor, not on grounds of humanity (which of course would not have worked with Hitler) but on that of efficiency. Most of the foreign slave labor conscripts presented multiple language barriers and Speer wanted to use German speaking Jews and women instead. But Hitler's priorities were on killing the Jews.

Speer claims to have plotted unsuccessfully in 1945 to free the country from its dictator by introducing Zyklon B poison gas into the Führerbunker's ventilation system. It would not work.

All this was unknown to that family in the quiet railroad compartment of that train rolling deeper into Switzerland, the wheels making clickety-clack over the tracks. What would have happened if they had been unable to flee? Would they have wound up in Auschwitz or Treblinka? Or worked to death in some obscure *Arbeitslager* in Germany? Very probably. Would they, in that chaos, have had the good fortune of making a Schindler's List? Not likely. Only 1,200 Jews were snatched from the ovens by that anomaly, Oskar Schindler, a strange humanitarian. But who could speculate? They were escaping what no one could yet anticipate.

Six million others failed and became statistics.

CHAPTER 8

Switzerland to S.S. Massilia

Lausanne. Our temporary home was one of those neat but inexpensive *pensions* or Bed and Breakfast inns that abound in Switzerland. We were beginning a new life under some severe financial restrictions, but we were all much relieved. Uncle Sale and Aunt Alice had been there already for some time. Their children, cousins Ralph and Vera, were students at one of the many excellent local boarding schools.

Father and Mother gradually shed the tension of the last twenty-four hours, and at our first breakfast together in freedom after that nerve-wrecking train-ride, we all sat around the table, and Papi calmly let it be known that we would never return to Germany again. We had guessed it all along, of course. I do not recall anyone being greatly surprised.

But what of the future? While we were excited and aware of our new freedom, our parents, who kept no secrets from us at this point, treating all three of us almost as adults, made it clear that the Swiss wouldn't let us stay. Of course. The Swiss would not let anyone stay (unless they could prove extreme wealth). Once our visas expired in ninety days and if there was no visa to another destination, the Swiss did not hesitate to return people to Germany. Even if, as they knew, it would mean certain death.

Father and his brother Sale now began calling on every overseas consulate in Lausanne, Bern, and Zürich, hoping to find one that would issue us immigration visas to their country. Day after day, the two returned to the pension, unsuccessful. All avenues seemed closed; the Americans conveniently hid behind their quota system. All countries knew the plight of the Jews of Germany, but shrank from taking action. The brave exceptions were Holland, Denmark and Great Britain, but they were in Europe and Father wanted no part of that.

Then, a big surprise. There was a hesitant knocking at the pension

door. Opening it, Father found a disheveled, bruised, obviously very tired but happy Lubbi Kauber. A short while after we left, Lubbi, who had great faith in Father, decided to flee Germany, no matter what. Traveling without papers, day and night, hitchhiking, walking, he finally took a train to Konstanz close to the Swiss border. Rightfully fearing the very tight German border and passport controls there, he jumped off the train. The only thing between him and freedom was huge Lake Constance. He surveyed it carefully, picked a suitable spot, and then swam across it at night—about two miles of frigid waters. Only his first rate conditioning as an athlete allowed him to survive that. He emerged exhausted, dirty, very hungry, but naively happy. He trusted Father to find a way for him to stay in Switzerland. For, as he saw it, Father had always found a way.

Not this time. Lubbi needed hiding from the Swiss authorities first, then we would see what we could do for this courageous young man. He stayed with us at the pension for several days regaining his strength and composure and getting some new clothes. Father contacted the already besieged refugee organizations in Switzerland on his behalf, but they had no choice except to have him interned in a Swiss refugee camp. Regrettably none of us really know what finally happened to him.

Unable to obtain any positive response from any foreign consulate or embassy in Switzerland, Father thought of trying Paris. It was considered far more productive in this regard. But the French consulate in Lausanne refused to issue entry permits. After all, they maintained imperiously, he was a resident of Germany, on a visit to Switzerland, and only the French consulate in Leipzig could issue a visa to France. There was no choice. After telephoning to Herr Süptitz, he most reluctantly entrusted the three passports, his, Mother's, and Freddie's, to the mails to Germany for Süptitz to see the French consulate on his behalf. For seven long, agonizing days and sleepless nights he was a man without papers in a foreign country, a nightmare in those days. A week later a fat envelope was delivered to the *pension*, returning everything, French visas and all.

Father said many times afterward that was one of the worst weeks of his life.

It was now time for Robbie and me to be enrolled at one of those

fine Swiss boarding schools. The emphasis on education in our family, despite the financial sacrifice it represented under our new, reduced circumstances, was paramount. Institut Gabriel Rausch, near Lac Leman was an attractive boys' boarding school with students from all over Europe. It was different all right. All classes were in French, and Robbie's and mine was almost nonexistent. But it was a new, very pleasant atmosphere. I even got to join real boy scouts this time, but there was no money for a uniform. Our schoolmaster, Monsieur Chambordon, was a charming man who looked after his two new, slightly uncomfortable charges. We experienced a very memorable Christmas in Lausanne. The students and the boy scouts had been collecting gifts for months. We wrapped them carefully and on Christmas Eve, our whole troop, made up of an international assortment of boys, distributed them among the poor, pulling a cart full of fancily wrapped toys and gifts through the snow-covered streets of the poor district of Lausanne playing Santa Claus to wide-eyed, grateful youngsters. It was perhaps the most memorable and meaningful Christmas of my life. Even today, more than fifty years later, I can look back on it with tender pleasure.

While Robbie and I were at school, Father, Mother and Freddie, now fully equipped with French entry permits, traveled to Paris to continue the search for visas—to somewhere, to some country. It had come down to that.

The reader will remember that we were holding Costa Rican passports, and like many others today, unaware of the turmoil of that time, may wonder why there was this frantic search for visas when we could have simply gone to Costa Rica. I have explained elsewhere under what circumstances these passports were issued. While they were valid and legitimate documents per se, they were certainly unauthorized. Had we traveled with them to Costa Rica, there was the clear risk that the authorities would have confiscated them promptly, leaving us not only unable to enter Costa Rica, but to go elsewhere, either. Without passports we would have simply become non-entities. A death sentence, then.

Father's sister Bertel and her French husband Alex had lived in Paris all their lives and were to be our one family link in that large, unfamiliar city. They had three boys, our French cousins Lucien, Claude,

and Dede, our ages. Papi, Mutti and Freddie moved into an inexpensive hotel in the Rue d'Hauteville, close to Bertel and Alex's apartment. All of Father's Paris business friends were happy to see him out of Germany, urged him to stay there, and offered all necessary help and money to set him up in business again. They maintained that we would be safe in Paris even if war broke out in Europe. After all, there was the impregnable Maginot Line. Father steadfastly refused. He told them he had quit Germany, he would now leave Europe behind him. His French friends were incredulous.

Uncle Sale was now in Paris also. He was very much at home there. His French was flawless, and he had a lot of business connections. One day—Father told us all this later—Sale invited his brother to lunch. He had a splendid proposition to make. Curious, Father met him, hoping that his brother had uncovered some important lead for visas to a good country. Instead Sale proceeded to outline "his carefully thought-out plan." Father should go to Aden in Yemen, on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, and buy up a certain kind of goatskin available there. Large quantities were needed. Sale was to remain in Paris; after all, he knew his way around there better than Father and besides—as he never failed to point out—he spoke fluent French. He would arrange the skin processing and dyeing in Paris, and the marketing. They would both make a lot of money. Father, aghast at the suggestion, played along. Aden was and still is a hellhole. "And what about my family?" he asked. "Of course they can go with you," Sale announced matter of factly. "Or, if you wish, they can stay here with me. I'll look after them."

Father laughed, albeit bitterly, at his brother's "readiness to sacrifice himself" in Paris, while he—well, need one tell more? So much for Uncle Sale's "splendid proposition." Lunch concluded. Forty years later, while on a freighter voyage around the world my wife and I came within a stone's throw of the port of Aden, and I had to chuckle to myself, thinking of that lunch in Paris.

The search for visas continued unabated. Father met lots of other refugees, many in the same boat, and many with so-called stateless passports, much worse off. Within his first few weeks in Paris, Father accidentally ran into Karl Greif, also from Leipzig. It turned out that he had connections at the Brazilian consulate, where he had obtained

visitor's visas for himself and his wife, and he was eager to share his good fortune. Yes, Brazil would be a good country to go to; at least there was some family there already, Uncle Bernhard and Tatschi, mother's sister, from Berlin.

Greif took Father to the consulate and made a few introductions. Several days of tense waiting. Another appointment, and money changed hands. (Consular officials in many South American consulates did a brisk business selling short-term visitor's visas to the highest bidder. The demand far exceeded the supply. A real trade in human misery had blossomed.) Miraculously, Father obtained visitor's visas valid for three months for all of us to Brazil. A sham, but first and foremost, a way out of Europe.

It was now mid-January and Mother had to return to Lausanne to pick Robbie and me up at school and take us to Paris. We were on her passport. To do so she now needed a French exit visa and reentry permit to France. French officialdom proved most unsavory, deliberately uncooperative. All was within our grasp to leave Europe for Brazil, but the battle with French authorities went on and on. More connections. Someone knew a deputy—i.e. the equivalent of a congressman—who wrote a little note to some bigwig at the French police. Miracle. It worked. Mother, speaking almost flawless French herself, got her exit and reentry permits in minutes. She arrived at the school in Lausanne and returned with Robbie and me to Paris. We were all together again.

Bitter cold, that winter of 1938 to 1939, one of the coldest on record. But none of us cared. We had a good time in Paris. I scratched my name into the wall of the stairway up the Arc de Triomphe. The first and last time in my life that I left graffiti behind. Up to the Eiffel Tower. Invalides. Versailles. Notre Dame. Montmartre. The Louvre. Mother and Father showed us so much; in retrospect I think they knew instinctively that none of us would see Paris again for a long time, if ever. Sometimes our Paris cousins took us. Unfortunately our French was not yet good enough to really get to know these boys. We struggled to communicate.

Father had invited Herr Süptitz to Paris for a business conference. Süptitz arrived, elated to have traveled to Paris for the first time in his life.

A curious cultural observation: Despite the long-standing Franco-German animosity dating from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, the Germans have always secretly admired the French and not so secretly considered Paris the jewel of the world—the one city they would choose to live in if they could. The German expression for the good life says it all: "He lives like God in France."

Herr Süptitz stayed only briefly and returned to Leipzig. Father was silent. Several days later, a beaming Herr Süptitz was back in Paris for another meeting with Father. We only saw them sometimes at lunch, otherwise the two were closeted together conferring, about what we did not know.

After a few days there was a final farewell lunch with Herr Süptitz. He was about to return to Germany. Father had taken us all to a fine kosher restaurant in downtown Paris, and the two of them were in a good mood. Süptitz, after days of French food, and he could not make out a French menu, asked Father to simply order him some "Pig's knuckles with sauerkraut." This epitome of German cuisine was hardly available in Paris—and certainly not in a kosher establishment! There was some self-conscious whispering between the two men, some suppressed smiles from us boys, above it all detachment by Mutti, and something else was decided on. After lunch Herr Süptitz, quite emotional, bade each and every one farewell and then he was gone. No one would ever see him again except me, many years later, after the war.

The upshot of their meeting: Father had scored another of his master strokes. Realizing that everything he had left behind in Germany was really no longer his, he had tried to save what little of it he could. It had been agreed between them that Süptitz would sell Father's life insurance policy, and from the German funds procure, pay for, and send us five steamship tickets to Brazil, on the SS *Massilia.* This was a French passenger liner departing Bordeaux on February 1, 1939, bound for Rio de Janeiro and Santos.

He would also arrange the packing of the entire contents of our Leipzig apartment, lock, stock, and barrel into a container, or "Lift" as it was then known, and have it shipped to Brazil, all paid for from Father's insurance policy.

In a quid pro quo, Father and Herr Süptitz prepared and signed documents leaving Father's entire business and blocked bank accounts to him. Father also had to sign a prepared statement stating he would never return to Germany. When Herr Süptitz happily departed Paris that day, the documents in his briefcase had theoretically made him a wealthy man. Granted, once back in Germany, he did not have to keep to the bargain any longer if he didn't feel like it. He had the documents to prove that he was now the sole owner of a substantial business, not just its chief of staff. But years of mutual loyalty, respect, and working together had had their effect. Herr Süptitz carried out everything Father had hoped he would. Father's very substantial assets left behind in the firm were inaccessible to us anyway. This way he salvaged at least something, conserving our own meager resources. The two men never saw each other again. They only corresponded, and Herr Süptitz was always correct and precise in everything he did.

Our last weeks in Paris, waiting for our ship's departure from Bordeaux, went by fast. There were many dinners at Bertel and Alex's. They felt secure in France. Lucien, their oldest son, had just been inducted into the French Army. He was about to graduate as aeronautical engineering student and almost a pilot, just waiting for his final solo flight to get his pilot wings. Despite his advanced training, he was assigned to the infantry, his protests notwithstanding. Lightheartedly, he decided to ignore his orders, on the premise that he would have his pilot license in a few more days, upon which he would volunteer for the French Air Force. The army, of course, saw it differently and had him picked up at home as a deserter, and thrown into the stockade to teach him a lesson. Two evenings after this rude induction as a raw recruit, he showed up at home in the midst of dinner. He had simply bribed his jailer with some cigarettes for a few hours of freedom and walked out of the barracks in a group with some other poilus. No problem. While Lucien joined us laughingly for his second, and better, dinner that evening, Father surveyed his already used, threadbare, ill fitting uniform. Boots so small that they hurt (the only ones available), woolen gloves with torn fingers, a greatcoat his mother undertook to repair right then and there, after dinner. Father quietly concluded that his decision to leave France was more justified than ever. It seemed an ill omen of a country not well prepared for war. Such chaos, such ap-

parent lack of organization, discipline, and will in an army that must sooner or later confront the Wehrmacht. It was frightening. How prophetic he was!

Cousin Dede, my age, drank wine at dinnertime. Robbie and I wanted some too, but our parents were not amused. Forget it, we were told sternly. You drink milk. Only they and Freddie tentatively shared in the very dry *vin ordinaire* that the French drink in their homes from large bottles bought every day, like their baguettes.

After Father's meeting with Herr Süptitz, Mother made some last minute purchases for everyone at Galleries Lafayette and Printemps, those famous Parisian department stores. It was frightfully cold, streets slippery with ice and snow, but with great perseverance mother still managed to obtain some summer clothes for everyone. But the piece de resistance were light tan Palm Beach suits with long pants (over Mother's protestations) for Freddie and Robbie too—Robbie's first long pants—was he proud! Mother steadfastly refused to buy me a suit with long pants. It would have been too much to hope for anyway, even if the Printemps saleslady found it odd, as most French boys my age and size were wearing long pants. Barely two weeks later we were to step into one of the hottest summers Brazil had experienced in decades.

How did our Paris family fare after we left and the war broke out? Lucien, despite having gotten his wings and his Herculean efforts with the military bureaucracy notwithstanding, never made it into the French Air Force. Once the infantry had him, they kept him. After the debacle of the French army before the Wehrmacht onslaught, he escaped being taken prisoner, disappeared, and joined the resistance throughout the entire war. After the occupation of Paris by the German Army, his mother, jolly Bertel, was picked up in the street by the French police, who were cooperating with the Gestapo, and shipped off to some KZ, never to be heard from again. The two boys, Claude and Dede, upon getting word of their mother's arrest, suspected that they would be next. They abandoned their apartment in minutes with their father Alex and hid him and themselves in the country for the duration. Alex died eventually after the war. All three boys survived, and Claude and Dede are alive and well in Paris where Robbie managed to find them a few years ago while he was there. He never

saw Lucien however, who had retreated into the countryside and now leads a quiet existence.

The Atlantic crossing aboard the SS *Massilia* was fascinating, for us boys a great adventure. For days we explored everywhere, bridge, engine room, etc., and only showed up for meals in the dining room. My twelfth birthday was spent ashore on our first stop en route, Lisbon. After all that we experienced in those last few months, neither I nor anyone else took more than perfunctory notice.

A storm. Only the men at our table appeared at mealtimes. The dining room was quite empty. Mother in her cabin, seasick like so many others. A number of other emigrants were also aboard, but I remember very few. Like that nice Hungarian family Farkas, with two grown-up daughters, who spoke of their photographic equipment shop left behind in Budapest. Or the two middle-aged twin brothers, the Weiners, who shared our table, one-time Europeans who had left very early on, already long-time residents of Rio and now just returning from Europe. We peppered them with questions about Brazil, which they often tactfully avoided answering. Every day a large bowl of fruit was set on our table. All five of us fell upon the oranges and bananas, the two brothers picked the apples. "Eat the apples," they good-naturedly counseled us. "Brazil has lots of oranges and bananas, but no apples." Of course we didn't listen.

CHAPTER 9

Brazil

The SS *Massilia* arrived in Rio de Janeiro, our first port of call, early in the morning. What genuine excitement. On the pier a mostly white-suited crowd in Panama hats waved wildly to those aboard, all the while wiping their foreheads. We quickly realized why. The heat was oppressive. From the unusually severe Paris winter well below zero, into a particularly hot Brazilian summer simmering around 100°F. The shock was enormous. And it wasn't the only one. Others were to follow rapidly.

Our first steps ashore in Brazil were very exciting. Before going down that long gangplank after so many days at sea, past the local customs officers waiting to check everyone, the Farkas family had distributed to each one of us an expensive Contax, Leica, or Rolleiflex camera, now hanging around our necks like tourists. As soon as we were all past the customs checkpoint and out of their sight, Mr. Farkas collected them from us with a gleeful smile and handed them to someone from his family already waiting for them in Rio. We had just smuggled them past the customs.

Everything, we thought naively, was now behind us.

Of course we got a taxi to take us sightseeing around Rio: Sugarloaf, Corcovado Mountain, Copacabana Beach—our first impressions were overwhelming. So much sun, such long lovely beaches, such colorful multitudes in the streets. Freddie, Robbie, and I have a vivid recollection of a funeral procession. As it passed us at an intersection, our heavily perspiring taxi driver commented something in Portuguese, and a tour guide translated: "The deceased had eaten a mango fruit and drunk milk afterward, which killed him almost instantly!" Although none of us had any notion of what a mango was, it never occurred to anyone at the moment to question this bizarre nugget of knowledge on the part of our taxi driver in a city of millions. Suffice to say, that our table at home in Brazil never saw mangos. Speak of

first impressions, Mother never forgot that first encounter in Rio. We boys ate mangos away from home, and once, just to test that questionable story, deliberately drank milk afterward.

It was a very hot and exciting day with a myriad of new and unfamiliar impressions. Late that exciting and exhausting afternoon, we boarded our ship once more to continue the voyage to the port of Santos, our ultimate destination for São Paulo. There we would meet Uncle Bernhard and Tatschi, who would take us to their home in São Paulo where we were going to stay to begin with.

Things were now happening very fast. Mother anxiously made us pack our belongings, even if there were two days left. She was not taking any chances. The reality began to sink in that another, this time pleasant, phase had come to an end, and we would arrive in a strange new world to start a new life. This was more serious.

I remember little of the turmoil of Santos—waving to Uncle Bernhard and Tatschi waiting on the dirty docks below, seeing them again for the first time since Freddie's Bar Mitzvah in 1934, getting off the ship with all that luggage, going through the all-important passport and visa control (who knew *what* visas the embassy in Paris had stamped into our passports). The lengthy taxi ride to São Paulo was exciting, 2,400 feet higher, up a serpentine mountain road with hairpin S curves, during which Tatschi appeared paralyzed with fear, much to our concealed amazement. Eventually we arrived in São Paulo at their home, one in a row of small, adjoining houses on a street impressively named Alameda Rocha de Azevedo in a residential area called Jardim America. Now the adults, exhausted from the heat and the lengthy trip, especially Father, attempted to bring order into chaos, what with five new people moving into a very small house meant for two.

We three boys were quartered in the dank basement, where, thankfully, we were somewhat removed. The adults accommodated themselves upstairs according to Tatschi and Bernhard's directions. Despite the incredible inconvenience we five must have represented, they, a childless couple, were really happy to have us.

Now followed days of exchanging endless questions and answers about the past several years, happy meals in very restricted space, and for us three the fascination of exploring our new world, which func-

tioned in a language we did not speak or understand. My most vivid memory in those early days was Father suffering in the intense heat, perspiring profusely while lying on his bed, barely dressed and fanning himself with a newspaper. He moaned ironically, "The best thing about Brazil is the rapid transatlantic steamer back to Europe!" It may sound ungrateful after all that preceded it, and it certainly was not meant as such, but his misery then and for years to come was to haunt me. Papi would have been a most enthusiastic devotee of air-conditioning, had it existed.

In reality, we wasted no time getting started in a new life. Portuguese language classes were arranged with pleasant Mr. Braun, formerly from Budapest and now a certified translator in a small, dinky office downtown. We boys went three times a week, and our parents twice weekly. He proved to have the patience of a saint, and three months later we spoke Portuguese. For better or for worse, at least we could communicate. Mother and Tatschi busied themselves with homemaking chores, Mother learning the ropes of shopping on the once-a-week open street market, the *Feira*, right in front of our house, an adventure in its own right. Many hundreds of canvas-shaded stalls were set up in the early morning of *Feira* day, two blocks long and one across. All hawked fruits and vegetables of which many were quite strange to us, or staples like rice and black beans—the national dish—or meat, fish, live poultry, household goods in a never-ending kaleidoscope. All most colorful and chaotic, and yet there was some order to it.

Endlessly, Father and Uncle Bernhard explored good and bad possibilities for earning a living in this new country, where all familiar standards and rules did not apply. Uncle Bernhard was obviously eking out a living of sorts. He ran a spartan retail bread store on Rua Liberdade, the bread coming from a large nearby bakery. It was grossly primitive, like much of São Paulo in those years, and he wasn't making a decent living either. Fascinated by everything around us, I often accompanied him to the store in those first weeks, enjoying the ride in the open streetcars with him and observed the painstakingly slow proceedings. Sometimes he amusedly entrusted me with a few coins and coached me patiently on how to ask for his brand of cigarettes in that Brazilian institution, the *Cafézinho* (espresso) bar a few

doors down at the corner. I kept repeating to myself his brand all the way there—"*Continental*" and "*liso*" (without filter) until I was soon expert in buying his cigarettes. He had one employee, a black teenage delivery boy (which in Brazil meant absolutely nothing; half the population was black and no one took notice of someone's skin color) who sat sullenly in a corner on a box, waiting for Bernhard to call him to make a delivery of a loaf of bread or, to my dismay, just a handful of slices, to some nearby home in answer to a phone order. Bernhard always bellowed out the single word *Venca*, and the boy came to perform his duties. I soon assumed his name was *Venca* and referred to him once that way during dinner. Uproarious laughter from Bernhard and Tatschi. That was not his name! *Venca* was Bernhard's immigrant not-so-hot Portuguese for *Vém ca* or "come here." That word was apparently a major component of my uncle's linguistic prowess, and he didn't need much more than that in the bread store. His Portuguese never really took off. Like thousands of other European immigrants, he had neither the time nor the leisure to learn the language properly. He would always speak it poorly with a heavy accent, in contrast to Father, who eventually spoke very well, and Mother, who could speak it fluently when she wanted to, but preferred German. It did not keep Bernhard from becoming a very wealthy man many years later. But not now. Not yet.

Living with Bernhard and Tatschi soon became too much of a burden on them as well as our parents. There was no privacy whatsoever for anyone in that tiny house. I remember vaguely that tempers occasionally got frayed a bit after a few weeks and three healthy, noisy boys can certainly be a problem for a childless couple. Discretion was the better part of valor. Father exercised it, and we were all grateful. Another chapter in our new life began.

We moved to one of the several *Pensão* or family boarding houses run by industrious local Germans for newcomer immigrants like ourselves. Spacious, this one-time mansion set in a large garden on quiet, residential Avenida Angelica provided a big, comfortable room for our parents and another large, airy room for us in a low detached building, removed from the main house. Three good meals were served daily for the guests, eight or ten families, all immigrants from various cities

in Germany and Austria, several with children. It was, I am sure, reasonable, for no one was well to do. All had similar pasts and familiar stories to tell, all were agonizing over their future, how to earn a living, better sooner than later. All were heavily burdened by the disruption of their lives, by the uprooting, by the loss of everything they had worked all their lives for, their situation in a strange country and culture. And yet, they managed to maintain their sense of humor. It was a good experience; we were not alone in our discomfort and bewilderment.

It was here that we met a fellow boarder, Helmut Friedman, who lived in that same little building next to us boys. About Freddie's age, he too had had to flee Germany. He was half-Jewish and thus an unacceptable entity in that country. Blond, tall, he could have easily been a HJ leader. He was terribly lonely, his world suddenly brightened when we three moved in next door and accepted him as our friend. That he remained for decades, in and out of our house like Mother's fourth son.

In those early years, Brazil produced lots of oranges. Trucks cruised the Avenida, hawking huge navel oranges in minimum batches of fifty for one milreis, a little more than for a pack of cigarettes. Father sent us out to stop a truck. Fifty oranges didn't last too long for us five Europeans. Usually we bought a hundred. Gentle Mr. Levin, one of the guests, who, alone with his wife could not hope to consume that many asked if he might join us in a "buying co-op." As he said, "It was good to have connections to a large enterprise."

Impatient to go to work and earn a living, Father gave in to Bernhard's counsel and went into the cinema business with him; he was supposedly the expert, because he had operated cinemas in Berlin before emigrating in 1935. What little money Father had, he put up. It could not have been much. His brother Sale had informed him in Paris that the funds their business had managed over the years to squirrel away in London no longer existed. It had just been used up, Sale said. But a then sizable sum, 120 English pounds, was in the hands of childhood friend Felix Kestenbaum in Johannesburg to whom Father had given the cash when Felix and his father emigrated to South Africa, and when Father called for it, Felix transferred it immediately. It was a beginning.

Bernhard had the experience. Never mind that he was not a good business manager, that he had been in constant financial trouble running his rented movie theaters in Berlin. A hair-raising venture, that was *Cinema Esperia*—by our standards a run-down, shabby flea-bag in a terrible neighborhood. Actually it was OK by São Paulo standards. Another new world. It was a real culture shock for Father. He now worked nights, and slept by day. Working with Bernhard, he learned how to book movies, plan schedules, deal with the staff—some good, most unreliable. We were all enlisted to help, first and foremost to lick and glue on the ubiquitous, colorful Brazilian consumption tax stamps across the back of every ticket ever sold in that cinema, year after year. And the two men spent every night praying that the films wouldn't rip or that the projector operator didn't forget to keep the carbon arc properly adjusted so the screen wouldn't go dark. In either event, an infernal noise of wild foot trampling and whistling would summon poor Father out of his office, his face ashen with worry, his eyes wide, asking searchingly, "What's happened now?" The internal telephone to the projection booth, when it worked, would tell the story—whether the interruption was to be short or lengthy. In the latter case the house lights would come on and the trampling subside temporarily. But not for long. That orderly, disciplined European business executive was just not up to such raucous behavior. It took the poor man a very long time to accommodate his psyche to all of this. And it took its toll.

But Father was now earning a living and could take pride in it. Everyone admired (and envied) his courage to go into business so soon after arriving in the country. The other heads of family in the *pensão* were still debating what to do and could never decide. He felt useful and productive again. He was on his way. Soon our parents mentioned graduating from the *pensão*, of renting our "own" house.

Rua Veneza 802 was a lovely house, and it lay at the very terminal of the Jardim Paulista streetcar line, so that excellent and cheap transportation was ensured. Three good sized airy bedrooms, all with their own balconies, a fancy black and green marble bath, a very spacious kitchen with permanent hot water throughout the house—a rare thing then—a large living room leading into the dining room, and a den or work room. Set in a very large garden with lawns front and

rear, flower beds, several papaya and one giant avocado tree loaded with fruit, shading a walk-in bird house. And of course, in the garden a separate building housing the servant's quarters.

Mother was now back in business, facing her responsibilities with Eugenia, our wonderful black maid who came with the house and had worked for the previous occupants, the owners. Mother now had to learn how to cook in earnest. Her experience in Leipzig was relatively marginal. There was always a maid and Ana, the cook. But it did not take her long, and she became a master at it. She had always planned and entertained well. Her increasingly rare cooking glitches were met with Father's "That's just the way I like it," in contrast to us youngsters, less experienced in the fine art of psychology, wrinkling our noses. It was not very long before Mother's kitchen earned her accolades from one and all.

The meals in our home were mostly European style. After all, meat, chicken, and fish are the same the world over; the difference lies in how they are prepared. Basic vegetables were the same. Gradually, Mother experimented with some of the exotic local varieties like chiote, okra, broccoli, and others as she gained experience and confidence. Bread, potatoes, spaghetti, and rice were plentiful and cheap. It was the vast array of colorful but for us strange tropical fruit that presented the agreeable surprise. Soon we all regularly had large slices of papaya with lemon juice at breakfast, avocados halved, with lots of sugar and lemon juice in the large hole left by the pit as dessert, bananas, pineapples, oranges, and tangerines in unlimited quantities, mango (away from home only), and an endless variety of other strange-looking fruit for which there are no equivalents outside tropical countries. Each of us had his own preferences. Freddie loved okra, Mother despised it. Everyone liked broccoli. We men all loved the huge watermelons father would occasionally buy from a roadside stand for pennies and triumphantly bring in to stow in the mostly full refrigerator only to meet with Mother's loud protestations that there was no room. Invariably, a reluctant but amusing accommodation was reached by removing something earmarked for the following day and promptly eating it at the next meal, to make room for half a watermelon to cool. Four men can really put food away.

Eager to experiment, we soon accommodated ourselves happily to

the maid's local specialties, the Brazilian staple of rice, tasty black beans, and very thin, pan-fried beef steaks known as *beefe*. She also made *Feijoada*, a labor-intensive, long-cooking stew of black beans, sun-dried meat, Brazilian sausages plus several salt pork ingredients like ears, belly and snouts added for flavor (at which mother wrinkled her nose). *Feijoada* was served with steaming rice, a collard-greens-like vegetable called *couve manteiga*, all sprinkled with dried manioca meal. So much so that whenever Eugenia, at the perennial question "What's on the menu today" sometimes suggested a *Feijoada*, Mother quickly decided on an easier alternative. In all fairness the dish, although deliriously delicious, is also very heavy and afterward makes your tummy feel as if full of bricks. The very popular *Feijoada* dish is unique to Brazil, and to this day served traditionally in restaurants on Wednesdays and Saturdays, for lunch only. As a result, activity progresses very sluggishly in the Brazilian workplace on Wednesday afternoons, and on Saturday afternoons half the country sleeps off their *Feijoada*.

We all drew the line at one thing or another. Sweet potatoes were certainly one of them. Also smelly dried stockfish reconstituted for hours in water. Or manioca root as vegetable. And canned, very salty butter usually rancid, once a staple, was soon replaced by fresh, wax-paper-wrapped sweet or lightly salted butter at the demand of the new European arrivals.

Now that we spoke some Portuguese, it was time for Robbie and me to go to school again. Eventually I discovered the joys of studying and learning thanks to a splendid history teacher at Ginasio Carlos Gomes, a private high-school on Avenida Paulista, a 30-minute street-car ride away. I began to discover girls, though mostly from a safe distance.

The most urgent task Father had set himself as soon as we got settled was to get his brothers Karl and Sale and their families out of Europe. Karl and Aunt Recha were still in Germany with Heinz, who had been on the train with us when we left a scant few months ago. Son Erich was in Bucharest, entangled with some local girl. Rolf had already gone to the Netherlands, preparatory to leaving for Palestine. Their eldest, daughter Irene, always somewhat of a maverick, was already in Switzerland and had no intention of going to Brazil—as if she

had many options. But she was a crackerjack secretary by then, and the Swiss let her stay. Karl and Recha corresponded with us and unquestionably felt the noose of events tightening around their necks.

Recha, together with Herr Süptitz, as arranged in Paris, had supervised the packing of our belongings into a container, although she simply had no control over things disappearing during the packing, such as paintings, certain pieces of furniture or the grand piano. This container was now en route to Brazil and its imminent arrival the key reason for the Rua Veneza house. She and Karl were understandably desperate to leave Germany. Father's enormous efforts to overcome the heavy-handed Brazilian bureaucracy, not without the frustrating and greedy help of a so-called professional *despachante* (a fixer), very much part of the Brazilian scene, were finally crowned with success. To everyone's relief they and Heinz joyfully arrived in São Paulo in the summer of 1939.

Somewhat different were things with Uncle Sale and wife Alice, whom we were not terribly fond of. They were still in Paris. Financially comfortable, he had quietly managed to get a good deal of his private funds out of Germany early enough, at a time when it could be done, in no small part thanks to his frequent business trips to Switzerland, London, and Paris as Father's partner in their joint business operations. But throughout those years he never discussed it with his brothers, never offered to share his strategies. Now he let his brother know in no uncertain terms that he and his family had no intention of going to that wild and woolly country, Brazil. *They* were going to Argentina. However, no efforts in that direction had as yet been initiated by him. Apparently he was supremely confident that for him there would be no problems.

Father, deep into maneuvering the entry permits for Karl's family, appealed to him that it was imperative to leave Europe immediately. While he was endeavoring to get Karl out, the same effort could also go toward getting Sale into Brazil. Once in Brazil, Father wrote, Sale could always go to Argentina later. Arrogantly, Sale refused to entertain this suggestion. Father was dismayed, as he feared time was running out, both in Europe and in Brazil. Entry permits were getting harder to obtain than ever. All South American consulates in Europe were being besieged by thousands of Jews desperately trying to leave.

Father resigned himself, despite his anger at his brother's stubbornness, that Sale would not be able to leave Europe in time.

Weeks later, one fine day over lunch at home, a Western Union cable was delivered. Nervously Father ripped it open and read aloud, incredulously: "Decided Brazil acceptable. Initiate permit process," followed by names and birth dates of each one in that family. No please. No thanks. No sender's name. Just that. The arrogance. And stingy. We were speechless. Nevertheless, Sale was his brother after all, and Father, decent as he was, sprang into action. He cabled back "What about Grandmother?" Sale replied economically "Not coming." Unbeknownst to his brothers, he had callously quartered his elderly mother, our cherished grandmother, in some Paris old-age home to face her uncertain fate by herself. He had no scruples about that. Sale, in one of his subsequent cables, maintained she had no valid passport and would not survive the trip. Father had to believe him. Some months later the four of them arrived in São Paulo.

After the war we researched her fate through one of those agencies, and eventually learned that this old lady, in Paris during the German occupation, had died alone, all by herself, in a hospital. She deserved better.

Alongside the two rescue efforts above, another had been put into operation. This one was for Mother's father, Opa, and his second wife, that wonderful lady by the name of Flora whom we all loved dearly. In retrospect, I would guess Father felt so strongly about Flora's well-being that to bring her to safety in Brazil it was necessary to bring Opa too. Father was never too fond of this obstinate, overbearing, ill-tempered old man. But blood is thicker than water, and how could we leave him there? They too arrived in Brazil eventually, just before the outbreak of the war. Gentle, long suffering Flora was to be a joy for our family. But the old man, unchanged, was to continue to be a thorn in everyone's side.

CHAPTER 10

World War II Breaks Out

Throughout that summer of 1939 newspapers were devoured at our house at an incredible rate. Every scrap of news that could be gleaned from the São Paulo dailies was read and translated for our parents whose Portuguese was not so fluent yet.

We also spent long somber hours discussing the news with friends and fresh arrivals from Europe as they trickled in. Daladier's weak French government. . . Gamelin's Maginot Line, which gave rise to the self-confident French slogan of the time "il ne passeront pas" (They shall not pass). . . Chamberlain and his humiliating trips to Munich, Bad Godesberg and Berchtesgaden to meet humbly with Hitler. . . Czechoslovakia's prime minister Bénes and bullied president Hacha. . . Sudetenland—and with it a certain wistfulness about Marienbad, our favorite summer vacation refuge from Germany in the thirties. For all the Europeans of São Paulo, whenever and wherever they met, those were the topics, and all were dismayed. The news were very bad. Hitler was gobbling up Europe and getting away with it. There was no one in Europe to stand up to him.

The Brazilians seemed unconcerned. What was happening in Europe was obviously all so far away and foreign. To them, true enough. More mature than my bare thirteen years, I had a burning interest in daily world events, which for all of us had moved to the forefront of our lives. Happily, untouched by it all, they read the soccer pages.

Throughout much of 1938, the Sudetenland, a ethnic enclave of some 3 million Germans living within Czechoslovakia, mostly along the German-Czech border, had been the subject of Hitler's demands that it be incorporated into the Reich. His undisguised saber rattling so intimidated the British and French Governments, both of which had guaranteed the sovereignty of that little country, that a meeting took place in Munich September 29, 1938, between British Prime Minister

Neville Chamberlain, President Edouard Daladier of France and Adolf Hitler—with Benito Mussolini of Italy, ostensibly acting as friendly intermediary—to discuss the issue of the Sudetenland, which Hitler termed his last territorial demand in Europe. Unwilling and unprepared to go to war over Czechoslovakia, the British and French heads of state, contrary to their earlier commitment, meekly acquiesced to Hitler and forced the powerless Czechs to cede the Sudetenland to Germany. The Czechs did not even have a say in it all. Neville Chamberlain flew back to London and upon disembarking from his plane, waved a piece of paper in front of the crowd, assuring everyone it guaranteed "Peace in our time."

It was to be short-lived. Only a brief time elapsed after the Wehrmacht occupied the deliriously happy Sudetenland early in October, before the remainder of Czechoslovakia was also summarily occupied by the German army and annexed as the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia in March of 1939. Neither France nor England raised a finger. The shameful Munich agreement, so painfully conceived, had already been broken. Now, summer of 1939, the news was full of foreboding. Hitler again was making demands on Poland for the return of Danzig and the Polish Corridor to the Reich. The Poles refused. On August 23 the world was stunned to learn of the signing of a German–Soviet nonaggression pact. Stalin, of whom we knew nothing other than that he was the top man in that mysterious U.S.S.R., had long been vilified by the Nazi press as the one and only real enemy while Nazi Germany was pictured as the world's bastion against communism. No one knew what to make of this startling marriage of convenience. But like everything else we read, it sounded ominous.

September 1, 1939. What was long feared finally happened. War broke out. Still it was a shock. Germany's massive invasion of Poland was now in full swing. Officially, the German press reported that Polish troops had assaulted the German radio station in Gleiwitz near the border, killing many Germans. Hitler was merely defending the country against this Polish act of aggression. As he, now no longer wearing the customary party brown, but a field gray Wehrmacht jacket he vowed not to take off before the final victory or die in it, said then in his speech to the Reichstag that morning: "Since 05:45 we are shooting back."

After the war secret documents would come to light showing that the Germans, once again under the immaculate planning of Reinhard Heydrich of the SS and SD had faked the attack on Gleiwitz themselves. One SS Gruppenführer Naujocks used hapless concentration camp inmates dressed in Polish uniforms and German civilian clothes, and shot them on the spot, their corpses "proof" of Polish "aggression." So Hitler had secretly created the pretext himself. Like some others of his cynical decisions, this one was questioned by the handful of OKW generals of his inner circle as being highly suspect. His rejoinder: "I do not fear a war; rather I fear that some *Schweinehund* will force upon me another mediation at the last minute." As to the crude provocation being planned at Gleiwitz, Hitler declared "whether believable or not, the victor will not be asked later if he was truthful. In war, right does not matter. Only victory matters."

The nonaggression pact Hitler negotiated with the U.S.S.R. through his Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, who flew to Moscow, was designed solely to keep his back clear in the forthcoming Polish campaign. To sweeten the deal for Stalin, who was very suspicious of the British but trusted Hitler—a fellow dictator not unlike himself—the two governments added a secret codicil to their pact, dividing Poland between themselves. Germany was to take the western part, while the U.S.S.R., at a given moment in the German campaign, was to occupy the eastern portion, and thus Poland would just disappear. Furthermore, Germany ceded the U.S.S.R. the right to occupy and incorporate Poland's Baltic neighbors, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. The pact also specified that the Soviet deliver vast quantities of strategic raw materials vital to Germany (which agreement was complied with punctually by Stalin, until Operation *Barbarossa* in June 1941 took the blindfolds from his eyes). Unknown to anyone in the world at the time but Hitler, the pact was an exercise in unparalleled cynicism that would have consequences reaching decades into the future.

Thus, in August of 1939, before the invasion of Poland had even taken place, Hitler was already planning his war with the U.S.S.R. to take place upon the conclusion of a proposed campaign to conquer western Europe. Given Germany's long standing fear of a two-front war, Hitler was adamant about planning to fight on one front only,

eliminating his European enemies first. Giving away eastern Poland and the Baltic states was an empty gesture. Germany would take them back quickly, later. But the Soviet strategic raw materials were crucial and a severe thorn in Britain's side, as unexpectedly it stood up to him, all alone, in 1940–41.

Hitler, and his logic seemed impeccable to him, felt that if no one in Europe had gone to war with him—not over the Rhineland in 1936—not over Austria in 1938—not over the Sudetenland in 1938—not over Czechoslovakia in 1939—certainly no one would do it over insignificant Poland, all treaties with Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R. notwithstanding. He now had a real war going he had been aiming for all along, and no one to stop him.

But Poland was to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

After ultimatums from London and Paris demanding that Germany cease the action against Poland and withdraw were ignored in Berlin, both France and Great Britain declared war on Germany.

World War II had begun.

Suddenly we matured awfully fast. Our carefree childhood years, long gone anyway, were now, in a flash, caught up by the deadly serious business of a world war.

The news from Poland went from bad to worse. The fury and efficiency of the German assault startled everyone. New words appeared in our daily language: *Blitzkrieg, Stuka, Panzer.* The Polish Army, pitting cavalry against tanks, was utterly unable even to delay the Wehrmacht. Warsaw fell September 27 after being ruthlessly bombed into rubble. The war was officially over on October 6. Capitulation. Britain and France, despite their declaration of war, were unable to intervene at all. Somber days, followed by a long lull.

April 1940 saw a swift German Army and Navy campaign that occupied Denmark and Norway to forestall British action there, brief engagements with the Royal Navy, in which Germany lost several cruisers, but on the whole the German success was undeniable. King Haakon and the government of Norway fled to London. King Christian of Denmark stayed in his occupied country, where he and the heroic Danish people conducted themselves nobly.

Suddenly no more movement. The war came to a standstill. France, already jittery, held its breath, looking across its Maginot Line at the

Wehrmacht just sitting there. It became what the wags called the *Sitzkrieg*. But not for long.

By early May 1940 the Wehrmacht turned its attention West. By now I had developed some expertise as a military observer. The room I shared with Robbie was outfitted with maps of Europe, I read everything about the war I could get my hands on, including WWI. The Germans circumvented the Maginot Line by slicing through the Netherlands and Belgium like a knife through butter. The Dutch fought bravely but briefly, Rotterdam got bombed to smithereens. Their Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana fled to London with the four little princesses. The Belgians fought valiantly, but could do no better. The battleground was an ominous repeat of 1914. Their great "impregnable" fortress Eben Emael, considered unassailable, was taken in hours by a force no one ever heard of before, paratroopers.

Liège and Namur followed. Little Belgium too capitulated quickly. Their King Leopold III was captured by the German Army and imprisoned at some castle for the duration. The fast debacle of Belgium left thousands of the recently deployed British Expeditionary Forces trapped in a small coastal town called Dunkirk. Most French troops, dispirited and poorly led but closer to home, managed to get out. The Wehrmacht's panzers standing at the gates of Dunkirk were about to annihilate a 340,000-man BEF. Suddenly the German armies came to a halt. There seemed to be a reprieve. The great painful evacuation of the battered British from Dunkirk was in full progress under constant Stuka attacks. Somehow, against all odds, the Royal Navy, aided by thousands of civilian small boat owners, managed to ferry the stranded men out to deep water ships waiting off-shore and got their troops out.

Much has been made of the German "hesitation" to advance at Dunkirk and annihilate the large British contingent. The halt of the panzers has given rise to much speculation and theories over the years, among which the preposterous notion that Hitler really didn't want to fight the British, that he liked them, considered them racially superior, much like the Germans themselves, hoped for an accommodation with them that would allow him to occupy England without a fight, and together they would rid the world of communism. The Wehrmacht's halt before Dunkirk was to signal his benevolent intentions toward the British! The plain fact was that the panzers were worn from weeks of

campaigning and desperately in need of maintenance and spare parts. Göring the vainglorious convinced Hitler that his Luftwaffe could finish the British all by itself, did not need the army. So the Stukas were sent to do the job. And the sturdy British withstood their attacks. While the BEF was painfully evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk, it had to leave all its equipment behind. But at least the soldiers were safe and would form the nucleus of a new British army. At the time, Churchill remarked that they had only sixty-seven tanks left to call their own.

Hitler's subsequent merciless bombing of Britain, London and Coventry in particular, as well as the V-1 and V-2 rockets later on in the war, hardly convey any feelings of benevolence and kinship for the British.

Regrettably, I did coin a grudging phrase that became a byword in our house and would be valid for several more years: "May the devil take the Germans, but whatever they do, they do well."

There was a new prime minister in Great Britain, Winston Churchill, until then First Lord of the Admiralty, who replaced the weak-kneed, now politically bankrupt Neville Chamberlain. Churchill sounded like a very determined man. Everyone took notice. His defiant, somber, but brilliant speeches stirred the House of Commons and the world. Britain's resolve stiffened. He alone was responsible for Britain turning down Hitler's offers of a peace arrangement.

Amid the major war stories, news filtered through that wherever the Germans moved in, they commenced rounding up and harassing Jews. The Jewry of occupied Europe, just as in Germany, were now forced to wear a yellow star on their clothing. The Danes alone, following the example of their king, defied these orders. The morning that the yellow star was ordered in Denmark, King Christian and the entire country appeared in public wearing it. It became a badge of honor. The German occupation forces were stymied and bewildered.

"Big Uncle Max," together with his Czech-born wife Annie and our two cousins Ellen and Marion had fled Germany for Prague early on, having been taken to the German-Czech border at Oberwiesenthal by cousin Heinz, where all four crossed illegally. But soon they were once more under German occupation. Suddenly, they were no longer heard from. We worried, but could not imagine what was actually hap-

pening in Czechoslovakia. Uncle Max disappeared without a trace. Annie and the girls, we learn many years later, were taken to KZ Theresienstadt where eventually they too disappeared. The only survivors of that family, for the time being, were the two oldest girls Rose and Hilde, who had emigrated to Palestine early. Both wound up in the British Eighth Army and lived through the war in the desert. Hilde, years later, upon learning of the fate of her family, committed suicide in Israel. Rose, an officer, met an RAF wing commander in Cairo, married him and lived in England after the war. Rose and Harold Ashcroft were later to disappear without a trace in Kuala Lumpur, during the uprising in Malaysia. Cousin Rolf, who had departed 1936 for the Netherlands en route to Palestine, never made it. The German invaders must have caught up with him. No trace of him was ever found.

The Wehrmacht offensive in France rolled inexorably forward. France still had a large army. But was it strong? All hopes that now a stop would finally be put to the Germans were bitterly smashed. No one was prepared for the horrible truth that began to unfold. A demoralized and poorly led French army was routed before a very fast German advance. The much vaunted Maginot Line was simply sidestepped by the fast-moving panzers. Entire French army divisions surrendered, fled, threw away their weapons. The newspapers could not print the news fast enough. On May 19, in the midst of battle, France's arrogantly incompetent Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Maurice Gamelin, who had relied so heavily on his Maginot Line, resigned. Another General, Maxime Weygand, took over. Too late. In a few days a German Panzer Corps stood at the Channel. An obscure panzer general called Erwin Rommel smiled from the news photos. Paris was threatened.

June 14 Paris fell without a shot. France capitulated and signed an armistice in the same railroad car in the Forest of Compiègne where Marshal Foch took the German surrender in 1918. Adolf Hitler, personally present to savor the ignominious defeat of a crushed France, looked on triumphantly. The news photos tell the story. A very old but popular French hero of Verdun in WWI, a Marshal Henri Petain, was taken out of mothballs and made president of a surprisingly compliant unoccupied France; the southern half of the country became Vichy

France, and Pierre Laval, an eager collaborationist was named—by the Germans—as its prime minister. The northern and western half, including Paris and the entire Atlantic and Channel coast went under German occupation. Most of France showed unmistakable signs of collaboration, its much touted Resistance, the Maquis, notwithstanding. A postwar documentary, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, by French film director Marcel Ophuls, is a most disturbing portrait of France's role under the German occupation. (So much so that the then president of France after the war prohibited the documentary from being shown in French cinemas.)

An obscure French general named Charles de Gaulle, author of a widely ignored textbook on armored tactics and perhaps France's only general who counterattacked during that melee, fled to London where he grandiosely established the "Government of Free France," gathering a handful of other escaped French officers and soldiers around him. The Wehrmacht, flushed with victory, marched through the Arc de Triomphe from which hung an enormous swastika flag. The newsreels were filled with pictures of weeping Parisians. They too became unforgettable.

Everyone in São Paulo was stunned. The entire foreign community spoke only in whispers. Even the Brazilians were taking notice now. What next? There was nothing between Hitler and the total conquest of Europe but the British. After Dunkirk and the fall of Paris, what if they too could not stand up to Hitler? What would Hitler do next? Anxiety pursued us all, particularly since the Brazilian government, run by a reasonably benevolent dictator, Getulio Vargas, was straddling the political fence. Obviously, Getulio had a penchant for admiring other authoritarian heads of state. Was nothing safe from that malevolent system?

August 1940. Germany's armed might turned its attention on England. Postwar documents reveal German through-the-back-door feelers to talk the British into giving up; the still mysterious flight of Rudolf Hess to Scotland probably fell into that category. We will have to wait until British archives on that are opened. But the British, although slow to enter a war, were even slower to leave it unfinished.

Years after the war, one learns that this was the time of the first secret stirrings of a German resistance movement. Small, but never-

theless, it existed. Already during the Czechoslovakia crisis, one Klaus von Dohnany, of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had excellent prewar political connections in Britain and was part of a tiny anti-Hitler conspiracy taking shape within the Abwehr, the Army Intelligence Section under Admiral Canaris, made several trips to Britain under cover of his diplomatic status. But he was unsuccessful in conveying to Lord Halifax that there was resistance to Hitler in Germany and that highly placed German military would support Hitler's ouster, if the British stood up to him on Czechoslovakia. Several intellectuals in Germany had banded together in the Kreisau Circle, under the leadership of Graf Helmuth James von Moltke, great grand-nephew of Bismarck's famous field marshal, and were groping with the notion of ridding Germany of the odious dictator. An engrossing book, *Letters to Freya* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), contain his illuminating letters to his wife from 1939 through 1945. Betrayed, and arrested by the SS in 1944, he was executed after the failure of the July 20, 1944 attempt on Hitler's life.

As time went on, their numbers were augmented by other German patriots, among them Generals Ludwig Beck, von Hase, Stieff, Henning von Treskow, Fellgiebel, Wagner, a Field Marshal von Witzleben, Leipzig's one time mayor Karl Goerdeler, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Social Democrats Drs. Leber and Leuschner, and others. None of this was known until the ill fated July 20, 1944 attempt by Col. Klaus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg on Hitler's life at his HQ in Rastenburg, East Prussia. That attempt, resulting in a ruthless SS hunt for the involved, was to cost 5,000 Germans their lives in brutal executions and a handful of suicides, including that of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, by then world famous.

But back to 1940. Hitler did not really cherish all-out war with the British and would no doubt have been eager to consolidate his easily achieved conquest of Europe if he could have cowed them into remaining on the sidelines. Because, in reality, he had much bigger plans for Germany's apparently unbeatable armed might. In this war he had so carefully engineered, Poland, France, and Britain were merely side issues.

An OKW (German Army GHQ) plan for the invasion of Britain called Operation Sea Lion, initially postponed by Hitler, was ordered

to proceed in July. But for Hitler, an ex-army corporal with an innate lack of knowledge and fear of naval undertakings, Sea Lion would call for naval vessels and seaborne landings and anything was better than that. Hermann Göring, his bemedaled Luftwaffe chief, again as at Dunkirk, convinced him that the Air Force alone could bring Britain to its knees. In August Hitler postponed Sea Lion once again till September. Instead, starting August 13, 1940, *Eagle Day*, a major German air assault was launched.

The Battle of Britain was underway. France-based Luftwaffe Air Fleets 2 and 3, and Stavanger, Norway based Air Fleet 5 relentlessly attacked the British Isles with 1,300 bombers and 900 fighters. The daylight attacks on British airfields and Flak defense installations proceeded ferociously. But the RAF's Fighter Command stood up to the Luftwaffe. New words creep into daily language: *Spitfire, Messerschmitt 109E, Hurricane, Heinkel-111, Dornier-17, Junkers-88.* But this time the story has an unexpected twist and something disturbed Göring's plans. There appeared to be a new kind of secret, early warning system installed along the southern coast of Britain. It was called GCI, Ground Control Interception. In effect, it is radar. The RAF fighters always seemed to know exactly where to find the enemy and gave the Luftwaffe a bloody time. By end of September more than 1,000 German aircraft had been shot down. All Luftwaffe efforts were targeted at RAF airfields, radar installations along the southern coast, and of course, aircraft production facilities. The purpose clearly was to knock out the RAF's fighter command, so Sea Lion, if still necessary, could proceed. It almost succeeded. The city of London was not a target. But on the night of August 24, some 170 bombers swept in to hit targets all the way from Kent to the Scottish border. In the ensuing melee, two of the Luftwaffe pilots lost visual contact with their radio-equipped pathfinders and strayed on beyond the main attack pattern. As a fountain of flak rose to meet them and got thicker as they flew on, they realized they were lost. They decided to jettison their bombs, turn east and head for home. They had just bombed London inadvertently. At Churchill's urging, orders went out to RAF Bomber Command and a wing of Hampden and Wellington bombers from Norfolk, up to now restricted to leaflet dropping over Germany, was told to load up with bombs for a reprisal raid on Berlin.

This raid on Berlin, totally unexpected, so enraged Hitler that he announced the bombing of population centers would now become an Act of Retaliation. London became a prime target. The subsequent round-the-clock Luftwaffe raids proved costly in aircraft losses, but the devastation caused by the blitz—fire, and losses among the civilian population—were heavy.

To no avail. The stubborn resolve of the British stiffened. The bone-weary and bloodied young men of the RAF and flak air defenses continued to inflict heavy losses on the Germans.

It gave the rest of the world, us included, a much needed lift, a new breath of hope. So there *is* someone who could and would stand up to the German juggernaut. The Luftwaffe took a very bad beating. Little did the German HQ realize, as we now know, that if the Luftwaffe had persisted just a little longer, the British would have been at the end of their rope. Switching their tactics from attacks on Britain's airfields and radar installations to the city of London, terrible as they were, gave the RAF a desperately needed breather to repair their battered forward airfields, replenish fighter aircraft, and above all, trained pilots.

Sunday, September 15, 1940—henceforth known in RAF annals as Battle of Britain Day—was to be the Luftwaffe's maximum effort to knock out the enemy. 400 bombers and 700 fighters were converging on the British capital. This time, the raiders were attacked from the moment they reached the English coast, and were never left alone. Fighter Command sent up its own maximum force—24 squadrons—and 22 of them, almost 300 planes, were dogfighting with Me-109s or inflicting mayhem on the Dorniers and Heinkels. It was to last all day, criss-crossing the blue skies with vapor trails. While British papers next day headlined "185 shot down" by the RAF, the actual figures were rather more modest: 56 German aircraft shot down, 26 RAF planes lost. But several dozen more Luftwaffe bombers limped back to bases, engines ablaze, crew members dead or wounded, undercarriages shot out. At least another 20 Me-109s, their fuel tanks dry, crashed into the channel on the ten-mile stretch between Le Touquet and Boulogne. Göring was chastened, and desisted, the Luftwaffe licking its wounds. The turning point he had anticipated with the September 15 onslaught had certainly been reached. But not in the direction the Germans had anticipated. The Battle of Britain was over.

Operation Sea Lion was postponed on September 17, and once more sine die in October. It was altogether canceled in May of 1941—Adolf Hitler's first serious setback.

So, the British Isles that were to be bombed into total submission in 1940 became the launching pad during 1942 and 1943 for the assault on Europe in 1944, that was to liberate it.

It is amazing how difficult times will produce great men when they are most needed. Winston Churchill's dogged determination in those days, so superbly expressed in his eloquent speeches, instilled pride. Of the RAF during the Battle of Britain, the first turning point in the war, he proclaimed,

"Never, in the field of human conflict, have so many owed so much to so few."

CHAPTER 11

About Being Very Sick

In those years I also fought a very personal war of my own, and it became ever more serious. A rather severe dermatitis with which I had been afflicted since infancy in Leipzig, and which kept my hands periodically in bandages, became successively more critical in the tropical climate of Brazil. What for most of my life alternated between light and heavy outbreaks limited to my hands, now also spread to the inside of my arms and back of the knees, with horrendous itching that I could neither control nor resist scratching until my nails drew blood. Eventually it became very serious, although not always of equal intensity. At times, the skin in the affected regions was literally in tatters, my fingers raw, swollen, incapable of bending or movement and eaten away almost to the bone. Like a war casualty, I was in bandages quite often.

Mutti had taken me, usually in tears, from one doctor to another almost all my life until then. As I grew older and became increasingly aware of this rather severe handicap I also became desperate. None of the specialists had any answers, and all they ever did was experiment, usually with pomades and injections, and over the years I was surely stuck with needles several thousand times. One medical encounter of several weeks duration with yet another dermatologist, a Dr. Treuherz, now in São Paulo, was particularly brutal. Unable to diagnose my ailment and unwilling to admit it, he forcibly washed my hands with ordinary toilet soap, an extremely painful procedure that was certainly the worst possible treatment for large areas of raw, bleeding flesh. I was in tears, complained to him bitterly that it hurt excruciatingly, but he was unmoved. Washing my hands was his treatment of something he did not understand. I did not take it for more than a few visits and refused to see him again.

Day and night during my early teens especially, my hands were periodically incapable of motion, heavily doused with pomades, creams,

unguents, or whatever the physician of the moment thought might work, and of course, heavily bandaged. I often slept nights with my hands fitted into oversized gloves, to prevent scratching during sleep, but nothing worked. I was desperate and miserable, and so was everyone else in my family. Ultimately, by mutual agreement, I tried sleeping on my back with my hands tied to the bedposts to keep them apart, and the boys kept some sort of night vigil to make sure the hands remained tied.

All this made school quite difficult. Writing was sometimes impossible, and I was often excused from athletics for months on end. But somehow I learned to deal with it, and my Brazilian classmates were very good about accepting my condition, without giving me a hard time. I hated to be different, but I had no choice.

I was so miserable, in such pain, and so depressed over the continuous, useless treatments that there were times when I seriously considered suicide. There was this long, high viaduct in São Paulo known as the Tea Bridge which separated the two downtown areas and over which everyone walked almost daily. I crossed it several times each week and could not escape the thoughts in my mind that it would be a suitable place from which to jump to put an end to my agony.

Some of my classmates in their teens, who like all Brazilians were preoccupied with Latin machismo and sex, were already steady customers of the city's red light district and tried to talk me into joining them. It would do me good, they insisted. Who knows, maybe a good dose of sex on a steady basis will cure you. They were so well intentioned but so naive. Besides, how could I show up at such a place in bandages!

Some time in 1942, when I was fifteen, *Readers Digest's* newly launched Portuguese language edition entitled Seleções appeared on the newsstands. A voracious reader and an unabashed admirer of everything American, I bought it every month and read it cover to cover. In one of its issues I came upon an article about a newly named disease called Allergy. It was a brand-new field in medical science, and somehow it caught my attention. I read the story repeatedly with great attention and became convinced that the description of allergy symptoms fitted me perfectly. I could not get it out of my mind and after several days of thinking about it constantly I searched the city's

directory of physicians. To my surprise, there was indeed one allergologist listed.

Quietly, without telling anyone at home, I called and made an appointment. A very quiet man, this Dr. Ernesto Mendes. He listened to me attentively and sympathetically, examined me carefully, asked a lot of questions, and made extensive notes. I liked him immensely from the first moment on. After quite some time, he thoughtfully allowed that my dermatological problem might indeed be the result of an allergic reaction. He indicated that if so, it was treatable (the first time in my life I had heard those words and wanted to trust them), that it could conceivably take a very long time, and that I had to be very patient. There were no overnight miracles in allergology, a medical field still in its infancy. He would be willing to test and later treat me and began to explain the complex procedures he would put me through, and that it could take years just to find the causes. I would have to see him three times a week, when he would make about a dozen superficial cuts on the skin on the inside of the upper arms, place a minute drop of different substances, chemically prepared, onto each little cut and observe the reaction. If the cut raised a welt, I was allergic to that substance.

Given the thousands of substances, including all foods and materials that exist in this world, I could easily surmise the extent of the task before us. He took me to a large room in his practice. Like a giant library, it was lined with several hundred linear feet of shallow shelving, with row upon row of thousands of tiny glass bottles with glass stoppers, each neatly labeled as to its liquid contents. Before I could agree, which I was determined to do, I had to ask the obvious: what might be the potential fee he would charge? With our limited means such a protracted course of treatment could, I realized with trepidation, make it impossible for me to accept his suggestions. In the kindest, most gentle manner he mentioned a fee which even I could quickly ascertain in my mind would not even begin to compensate him for such an enormous effort. I was embarrassed to accept his proposal, but did so immediately. We shook hands (as best as I could) and his pleasant nurse set the first appointment for tests a few days hence.

This wonderful, kind man was to be my angel. With patience and dedication, without ever inflicting any pain, eventually, over a period

of more than two years he cured me and rid me forever of that scourge of so many years of my life. I shall be forever grateful to him. Happily I was given the unexpected opportunity, some thirty years later, to meet him again in Canada at an International Allergy Congress, and return to him a small measure of what he gave to me.

As for the cause, suffice it to say that his testing revealed a sensitivity to a number of basic foods that I, like any other child, had been exposed to since infancy. Among them milk, tomatoes, and strawberries. But the source of the major irritant came as a shock. After exhausting his own samples, Dr. Mendes asked what unusual substances were present in my home and of anything that caught his attention a small sample was produced, prepared by him, and applied to cuts on my forearm. Among these were fur samples, for Papi by this time had gone back into the wholesale fur trade. When asked for various fur and leather cuttings, he supplied them, although somewhat incredulously; they were prepared by Dr. Mendes and applied. Fireworks! As it turned out I had been highly allergic all my life to the chemicals and aniline dyes routinely used in the processing of raw skins into furs. Enough that traces were on Father's clothing throughout my life until then, and Papi was devastated. The poor man felt responsible for all my suffering that he had so painfully and helplessly witnessed all these years. I had all I could do to convince him that this was not his doing and that I certainly did not feel he was responsible.

It did however explain one of the mysteries that had eluded all my doctors and of course, us all. When Robbie and I went to school in Italy in 1937, my skin problems disappeared quite quickly. A "change of air" the doctors said, for who knew about allergy then? That change of air accounts for my considering that brief year in the Dolomites one of the happiest and most carefree periods of my childhood.

Only after I recovered completely did my dear Papi bury his misplaced guilt and rejoice with Mutti and the boys in my newfound freedom and normalcy. It did wonderful things for me. Unburdened, I enjoyed school and my classmates of both sexes in a new way, improved my studies, and gained a new joie de vivre like other boys my age. I had become a new person.

CHAPTER 12

Studying English and a Bar Mitzvah Have Far-reaching Consequences

It was the summer of 1941. Much had happened early in the year, and none of it very encouraging, but one momentous event in the war took the world by surprise.

On June 22, 1941, Adolf Hitler undertook what he had always advocated. The German High Command launched Operation Barbarossa, a massive three-pronged attack upon the Soviet Union. The staggering surprise of the U.S.S.R. was only matched by the ferocity and speed of the German advance. In battle after battle the Red armies were beaten and driven back, the panzers raced forward, and highly successful Wehrmacht pincer movements were almost weekly events. Incredible numbers of Soviet prisoners were captured week after week, the total soon surpassing a million. The Soviet Union was being mauled. On August 21, barely two months later, with Moscow clearly within the grasp of the German armies, Hitler, much against the advice of his generals, halted the advance on the Soviet capital and directed his armies south to take the Ukraine and the Donets basin to secure their resources of oil and wheat for Germany. By this time Hitler had taken over the role of supreme military commander for himself. Flushed with victory, the one-time corporal now relegated his brilliant general staff to a secondary role and let them know how little he thought of them.

I had begun a quiet campaign to volunteer for the U.S. Army. I thought it would take quite a while and was not at all discouraged by the fact that at the time I was just a teenager. I wrote letters to the War Department in Washington with long explanations of why I wanted to join the army and why I felt it was "my" war. I collared every American I knew or met and discreetly (or at least so I thought) pumped him for information on how to enlist in the U.S. military. The

Army Air Corps was my dream service. I wanted to become a pilot in the worst way.

Reading avidly every issue of *Life, Saturday Evening Post, Look, Colliers*, and of course the monthly *Flying*, I was exceptionally well informed and believed I knew more about the U.S. military than most others. I knew by heart the characteristics of every aircraft then flying and would have made a fine plane spotter. I could recognize every one of them by their silhouettes or partial photos of their wing tips, tail sections, cockpits, noses—in short, the details of every RAF, Luftwaffe, U.S. Navy and Army plane was as familiar to me as my pocket.

I began to study the war in earnest, its battles and strategy, its commanders and weapons. Everything I could lay my hands on was read and reread and committed to memory. My English was reasonably adequate, but if I hoped, in my youthful enthusiasm, ever to get to Randolph Field, Texas, and understand the complicated flying courses taught there, I knew I would have to do a great deal better.

There was only one place to study English in São Paulo, the Brazil-U.S. Cultural Union sponsored by the State Department. They would teach American English, just what I needed. One afternoon after school I finally screwed up my courage and went there to investigate. I met a very tall, lanky, jovial American named John Culver from Wisconsin, who turned out to be its director. He didn't try very hard to hide a smile when I told him my reasons for coming and asked him straight out "how long it would take him to teach me to speak English perfectly." He never did say, but I enrolled right then and there, nevertheless.

Ultimately he and his colleagues did a splendid job for me and my class. Under the wing of Culver himself, several of us advanced very rapidly to become the top class in the school. We were not only a class but had become good friends among ourselves and with him. There were plays to perform, discussions about books, heated debates about politics. (We always had trouble pinning Culver down to a definition of the difference between Republicans and Democrats.) We became a unique, cohesive group, and our association would last for many years, well beyond the end of the war when as a grown-up I was teaching English there to evening classes of adults. It was a sad day

when John Culver was recalled home. But I am ahead of myself.

Disappointingly, my protracted letter-writing campaign to join the military was not successful. The polite answers I received from the War and Navy Departments, from the British War Office (I tried them all) were polite but uniformly discouraging. This went on for a long time and had a chilling effect on Mother. Those ominous looking envelopes from Washington would wait, unopened, for me to come home after school, and I could tell from Mutti's face when there was a letter for me. She'd say absolutely nothing, just point at it and then watch me silently from the other side of the room as I tore open the envelope and devoured the usually brief contents. My face would reflect my disappointment, and she would brighten up again.

In all fairness I must say that neither Papi nor Mutti tried too openly to discourage me from undertaking these efforts. I think they trusted that the military would not bother with a youngster of fourteen and fifteen no matter how convincing a case he might present, and they were right. I even wrote both my uncles in New York, Little Max and Benny, unsuccessfully trying to enlist their help. After all, they were already in the United States, the lucky fellows. Instead, Max poured oil on the fire by sending a picture of Cousin Norbert, several years older, as sergeant in a U.S. army uniform, and I envied him no end. One day, to my surprise, I received a letter from the Free French in London to whom I had never written. They were quite willing to take me into the Foreign Legion, directing me to the nearest Free French Consulate. It was a case of right church, wrong pew, for I was not in the least interested in the French. I gave up writing letters and resigned myself, to my parents' delight, to sitting out the war in Brazil. At the very least my enthusiasm caused me to learn fluent English during all those years. All I needed was an incentive. The language I had such trouble with in Italy in 1937 I began to learn in earnest. It was to prove very valuable in the future.

As time went on the family was holding its own. Papi was still in the movie business, but now there were two theaters. The Esperia, managed by Father and Uncle Bernhard, and the Dom Pedro I, way out in the blue-collar suburb of Ypiranga. Its management was shared between a new partner in the enterprise, a Mr. Sperling, and Freddie, now twenty and exceptionally responsible and quick on his feet. The

Dom Pedro I was a modern, quite new theater on a very busy thoroughfare, and it did very well. Robbie and I now had two movie houses to choose from on weekends. Those years gave me an education through movies, and in retrospect I do not think that we missed very much of what Hollywood produced from the late thirties to the end of the war. Undoubtedly, like millions everywhere I too was taken in by the glamour with which life in America was portrayed by the studios and which may have greatly contributed to the exaggerated rose-colored vision I had of the U.S.A.

We had also moved from the rented house as Papi, with his usual optimism, made the decision to buy a house instead of renting again. It made much better sense as an investment, he told us, and when we didn't quite understand, he explained it patiently.

It turned out to be a modest but very comfortable, pleasant three-bedroom house in the same quiet residential neighborhood we were already living in, although it had none of the generous front and rear lawns. The house shared a common wall with our next-door neighbors, a charming Brazilian family with two very attractive teenage daughters who very quickly caught Robbie's and my attention. But as it turned out we were their ages and thus no prospects, much to their mother's disappointment. Nevertheless, we developed a very pleasant social relationship with their very large family and were frequently invited to their parties, both next door as well as two blocks away, at the elegant mansion of an uncle with two very lively boys of Robbie's and Freddie's age. That led to invitations to spend wonderful, carefree weekends with them all in their large beach house in Santos where we were made to feel as if we were family. It was our first sustained exposure to a large, well-to-do Brazilian clan and culture, and it proved most pleasant and instructive. We soon discovered that Brazilians were very friendly, kind, and generous to a fault, accepted us foreigners without reservations, displaying much curiosity about the world we came from. The girls were actually allowed to be alone with us boys and occasionally join us to go to the movies without a chaperone (otherwise an absolute "must" in Brazil in those days). We liked them, but were no match for them, and they knew it.

Uncles Karl and Sale lived only a few blocks away in modest homes of their own, a five or six minute walk from ours. Cozy family

gatherings were frequent, Papi and his two brothers plus Freddie and Robbie spent many hilarious evenings together playing pinochle, the ladies chatting away. I must confess to being an utter card idiot. It just did not interest me although I greatly appreciated and enjoyed their uproarious laughter and mutual teasing.

Uncle Karl at this point, despite his age was active as a textile salesman. Actually, he worked on strict commission for a firm that sold fine cloth. In the absence of a ready-to-wear garment industry of any note for a barely existent middle class, one bought the cloth, and had a tailor make a fine, custom-fitted suit. Everybody swore by his favorite tailor. It must have been terribly hard for Uncle Karl, carrying those heavy leather sample cases and speaking only marginal Portuguese, but he bore it without a grudge. My favorite cousin Heinz, handsome as ever and popular with the girls, had a very good job in a large corporation, was doing well and helping support the family. Uncle Sale, difficult and never really popular with us, eventually went into business with a fussy partner, manufacturing baby pacifiers but acted as if he were building the atomic bomb. Their son, cousin Ralph, a year younger than I, now became my close friend and throughout those years we spent a great deal of time playing, studying, and raising hell together. It was too bad that he was such a hen-pecked boy at home where both his mother Alice and his sister Vera were constantly on his back. No wonder he spent most of his youth in our home where he was comfortable as one of the boys, and no one picked on him. His relationship with his parents was a poor one. One day, when we were in his room at his house, he, with great secrecy, allowed me to see a note he had scribbled on the wall. It was in a very hard-to-reach place and written in French: "I hate my mother." I was disturbed by that but I could understand. When we were both little boys in Leipzig, and our families would meet on the street he was never allowed even to shake my hand. Aunt Alice would pull him up short and not let him touch me, for I was the kid with the skin trouble, and she was having none of it. She never failed in that nasty gesture, which humiliated me then, and I never forgot.

São Paulo had several Jewish congregations. In ours, a Reform congregation (as opposed to Orthodox), the members were mostly im-

migrants from Germany and Austria. As before in Leipzig, my family was far from devoutly religious. Mutti, when all five of us were home on Friday evenings, would light up Sabbath candles held by the two beautiful silver candlestick holders from her Mother; we always lit the Hannukah menorah. And usually attended services on the three holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Like everyone there, we were chided regularly by the rabbi for being "three-day Jews." I always thought it was rather tiresome and he might have come up with something more inspiring. This German rabbi, Fritz Pinkus, was a rather modern, well informed but pompous type, who insisted on being addressed by his full title of "Prof. Dr." He conducted the Friday evening, Saturday, and Holiday services. He gave, I must acknowledge, enlightened, erudite sermons—fire and brimstone were never part of the Jewish culture—while Cantor Fleischman recited and sang the prayers. Services were held in a very large room of what was once a private home but currently served as the growing congregation's synagogue and daytime offices.

In late 1939, as I approached my thirteenth birthday, Papi and Mutti decided it was time to think about my Bar Mitzvah. I had always been an extremely poor—if not outright rebellious—student in religious classes at the Carlebach School in Leipzig, and my ability to read Hebrew was zero. Like most German-born boys my age, I had to take painstaking instructions for a Bar Mitzvah, and a teacher was found in the person of Cantor Fleischman of our congregation. A kind, gentle man, he could use the extra income. So, Cousin Ralph and I together trooped patiently by streetcar twice weekly to the cantor's home way out in the Vila Marianna district and dutifully, but hardly eagerly, learned to read and sing that portion of the Torah that would be assigned to us on the Saturday of our respective Bar Mitzvah dates. Ralph's was to be almost a year after mine.

As luck would have it, the Torah chapter assigned to my Bar Mitzvah date was not punishingly lengthy and, with much patience and forbearance on the part of Fleischman, I managed to learn my part, melody and all, well enough that we were both satisfied that I would not disappoint my parents and him on the big day. At this point, in his usual kindhearted way, he wanted to give me a feel of what I was going to be faced with. Accordingly, he asked me to attend ser-

vices one Saturday morning (which I usually never did), so that afterward, when all had left, he and I alone would have a kind of dress rehearsal. When the services were completed, and everyone gradually left the hall, Fleischman motioned me up to the dais.

At this very moment, Rabbi Pinkus appeared from nowhere and in a loud, angry voice demanded to know "who was this boy" (as if he did not know) and what in blazes was Fleischman doing there with me. I was mortified, and those still in the hall witnessed a severe dressing down of the mild-mannered cantor and a highly embarrassed thirteen-year old boy by a visibly agitated Rabbi Pinkus.

It became clear to me that Pinkus did not like the cantor. Exploiting his ranking position, he used this opportunity to vent his dislike and make me the scapegoat. "No way was this boy going to be a Bar Mitzvah" unless he, Pinkus, had "certified himself that I had been taught properly, and how dare Fleischman instruct me without Pinkus knowing in advance about it." Of course he must have known, for it was his business to know such things.

By now I was not only embarrassed. I was furious. How could a rabbi, the likes of whom I had been taught to respect, conduct himself in such an outrageous manner in public? Moreover, the criticism he had voiced, that of having been arbitrarily bypassed, was an invention of his overblown ego. Boys were becoming Bar Mitzvah almost every Saturday, and Rabbi Pinkus certainly did not have the time to instruct them all. He was simply picking a fight with the elderly Fleischman to assert his authority. I was ordered to come to his house in the following week, at which time I reluctantly had to recite my piece. He paid little attention to it and afterward declared me fit and ready.

Thanks to this uncalled for interlude with Rabbi Pinkus, I briefly and quietly entertained the thought of refusing to go through with the whole thing, despite the lengthy studying. But I did it after all for my parents' and Fleischman's sake, for I felt I owed them as much. Since then I have rarely voluntarily set foot in a synagogue again.

This incident created a crisis of conscience for me. It again resurrected some serious questions about the validity of faith and religion I had been harboring for some time. The horror of our time, our experiences in Germany, the miserable fate of so many people I knew, had already placed in serious doubt the convictions I had been raised

with about faith, belief in kindness, fairness, and helping the less fortunate. Whatever religious convictions I may have had before, were regrettably shaken by that man from that day forward. I was deeply troubled about my feelings, but that interlude coming from a man I least expected it from has caused me great anguish in my life.

As I advanced in years and learned more about life and the history of mankind, I became ever more aware that man is hardly the sublime creation he deems himself to be. I did not like that conclusion, but I could not escape it. Eventually more mature, I resurrected my instincts for helping those in need, regardless of who they were, and today my religion, best found alone in the quiet splendor of nature, is a kind of humanism.

The religious rites I was expected to perform with my brothers at our beloved Father's death many years later in deep anguish were, for me, regrettably perfunctory and out of respect and love for him exclusively. As to arrogant Rabbi Pinkus, and he always had plenty of company among men of the cloth regardless of their persuasion, that thoughtless, self serving moment saw to it that my Bar Mitzvah was the end of my religious convictions. I regretted it, but I never forgave him.

When the event finally took place to Papi's and Mutti's relief, I managed quite well. To them it was an *affaire du coeur*, a tradition handed down through many generations, that should be upheld, and I could understand that, although neither of them were religious. After services the usual congratulations followed and for the few friends and relatives we had at that time, a modest reception at home in keeping with the times. Everyone in those days was conserving his resources, if he had any at all. The watch Papi presented me with, my first, is still my cherished possession.

It would take fifty-five years and this book writing experience for me to reestablish warm Jewish community relations in, of all places, Middlebury, Vermont.

CHAPTER 13

America Gets Into the War. A Family Finds Its Way

Robbie meanwhile, not sure of what he wanted to do, went to work for Western Electric in their cinema projection machinery division, where he was to learn all about film projection equipment and would be of great help to Father in the movie business. But Papi eventually got out of that hellish occupation after a few years, and Robbie left Western Electric, as he was not too happy with his training, nor could he see any further usefulness in it.

Freddie, leaving cinemas behind, had landed a job in the small business of Mr. Berkhout, the Dutch consul in São Paulo and a friend, who literally ran a fur hunting and trapping operation deep in the interior of Brazil. Freddie, ever adventurous, took off into the jungles and forests of southern Brazil to a place called Ponta Grossa in the state of Parana where, under the supposed guidance of Berkhout's old father, he was supposed to learn hunting and trapping certain fur bearing animals for export to the brush and bristle industry. While he had a grand time playing Davy Crockett in the wilds and became really good at it, he could not get along with the old man, a nasty curmudgeon. But Freddie, when he returned home, certainly had fascinating tales to tell.

Much to Mother's relief Papi decided to try something other than the movie business, something with more civilized hours, and without Bernhard, as the partnership was fraying around the edges. As a matter of fact, only several months earlier Uncle Bernhard had successfully agitated for the acquisition of a third cinema to be added to the "chain" and which he was going to manage. It was located some five or six hours away by car in the interior of the state in a tiny rural town called Itapetininga. The theater was called by the same name. He moved there with Tatschi and now had a free hand running it without anyone watching him, and it became evident to Father that he was being cheated right and left. It never showed any profits, but only be-

cause Bernhard was now pocketing them through various stratagems. Father was fed up and disillusioned, and wanted out. The two São Paulo theaters, Esperia and Dom Pedro I were sold, and Bernhard kept the Itapetininga, where he began to lay the foundations for a very considerable personal fortune.

Father now racked his brains for an idea. And with his well developed sense of order (it works on all Germans, Jews or Gentiles!) he conceived, in all the chaos he saw around him, the need for a display device of city-wide emergency telephone numbers, neatly organized, that everyone would want to hang on the wall, near their telephone. He went about designing it and eventually, with all of us eagerly helping, also to gather telephone numbers, a carefully supervised test production run of a few hundred was ordered. It was a very neat, silk screened metal plaque, perhaps nine by twelve inches, yellow background, black text and numbers, very visible, with rolled edges and neat nail holes, ready to hang. An entire corps of emigrants, all eager to earn a living, were enlisted as commission salesmen. We were on our way, we hoped.

It was an unmitigated disaster. While a fair quantity was sold, mostly to other emigrants, the Brazilians were less sanguine. Greenhorns that we all still were, we were as yet unaware of the full extent of the chaos that reigned in the Brazilian telephone system. An American company built the network, after which it had become prisoner of tightly state-regulated phone rates that were absurdly low. The incentive to expand thus gone, telephone lines became as rare as hen's teeth, and a request for one, a joke in itself, implied years of waiting. So people traded in telephones. Rental office space that had a phone line was instantly snapped up between friends at high premiums. Offices without went unrented for years. Private homes had no priority whatsoever, so entire neighborhoods went to the local grocery or pharmacy and used their phones when they had to. We did it for years. It was commonly accepted courtesy all across the entire city to let anyone use your phone. But with all those phones changing hands constantly, the São Paulo directory was utterly useless. Probably no more than half the numbers in it belonged to the listed parties. The other half had changed owners, who could not request a corrected listing in the next directory issue, for the whole business of buying and

selling phone lines was illegal. Father's worst nightmare, a changed number, became a fact already days after the factory delivered his long awaited brainchild that was going to make a living for him. At once he arranged for printed stickers with the correct number, but it was impossible to keep up. How could Father know? How could any newcomer know? I am sure it sounds very Marx brothers—like today. But it was not funny at the time.

After this false start, Father was determined to get back into the fur business he knew so well, together with Freddie, while Uncle Bernhard stayed with the cinemas. Furs were, of course, not used to keep warm in that climate. Furs were a fashion statement and a status symbol. Robbie, like Freddie, with an eye to going into business with Papi, had decided to go to a trade school and study fashion design.

He did superbly well, and after graduation went to work in his first real job at a small neighborhood fur fashion shop to earn his spurs. He worked hard, put in long hours and after two years felt he needed a new challenge. With Papi's discreet assistance he went to work for one of São Paulo's premier furriers. Arnold Stolarski, formerly from Berlin, was a prince of a man who taught Robbie the fine art of it all. Robbie became truly expert at his trade after several years.

Everyone anxiously kept up with the war news. In Africa, the Desert War frustratingly seesawed back and forth as the British Eighth Army drove General Graziani's numerically superior Italian forces out of the Cyrenaica almost back to Tripoli, only to be thrown back themselves repeatedly by a newly arrived German contingent sent merely to help the Italians. It soon became known as the Afrika Korps under its commander, the now no-longer-so-obscure panzer general named Rommel. He was to became a legend in his own right, earning himself the sobriquet of Desert Fox, thanks to his brilliant and daring tank warfare tactics threatening vital Egypt and the Suez Canal itself. Once unknown places like Sidi Barrani, Benghasi, Bir Hakim, Tobruk, Buq Buq, and El Agheila took on major significance as they ferociously changed hands three and four times. Similarly, competent but hapless British generals named Wavell, Ritchie, Cunningham, and Auchinleck were replaced one after another.

But the news from the Russian front was even more disturbing.

Once again there appeared to be no stopping the Wehrmacht in its advance. By September 15, 1941, the legendary 900 day siege of Leningrad began. On September 27, after fierce, but brilliantly executed battles of encirclement, German Generals Guderian and Kleist of Army Group South under von Rundstedt sprang the trap, and Kiev fell. Two thirds of the Red Army strength at that front was destroyed, and 500,000 Soviet prisoners were taken, making it the biggest military catastrophe of the war, perhaps in all history. But despite this great success of German arms under his command and all the attending euphoria, von Rundstedt was darkly aware that for all their triumphs and ground won, something valuable and irreplaceable had been lost. Time.

Indeed, ominously so. The entire Operation Barbarossa had lost valuable time at its very beginning. Designed to be launched quite a bit earlier than June 22, Hitler delayed the start of the campaign, for he had to divert substantial forces to rescue Mussolini's troops who were in big trouble in Greece. The OKW was not going to launch Barbarossa until all minutely planned manpower allocations were complete.

But meanwhile, the advance continued. On October 2 the German attack on Moscow was launched. On the 7th, panzer forces encircled nine Soviet armies in two pockets at Vyasma and Bryansk. On October 8, Guderian captured Orel. By the 14th, his panzer spearheads closed in on Moscow. They were some twenty miles from Red Square. Reading the papers and listening to the BBC, one became despondent and nearly desperate. On the 16th, the Soviet Government abandoned Moscow and moved to Samara on the Volga, although Stalin remained behind in the Kremlin. Within a few weeks Odessa surrendered. And unknown to the rest of the world, German *Einsatzgruppen* (SS annihilation squads) followed on the heels of advancing German armies to round-up and execute hundreds of thousands of Russian civilians and Jews. At this time also the Germans launched their first large-scale extermination of Europe's Jewry by gas at Auschwitz. The Jewish population under German control not yet in a KZ was forced into slave labor, as were hundreds of thousands of civilians from all over occupied Europe. They found themselves drudging in Germany's armament plants.

At this point Stalin reorganized his general staff and had those he

considered incompetent summarily shot. However it had no noticeable effect on the advancing panzers. On October 24 von Rundstedt's Army Group South took Kharkov, and on November 3 Kursk. By November 21, Kleist's *Panzergruppe* slowly edged its way into Rostov on the Sea of Azov—and into a Soviet trap as dangerous as any the Germans themselves had previously set for the Soviet forces. As von Rundstedt had correctly surmised, the Soviet command had learned to trade space for time. After weeks of heavy rains the ground had turned to deep mud, and the motorized German armies faced not only serious transportation and fuel shortage difficulties but, still in their summer uniforms, their first snow flurries. It was a hint of the white chaos soon to engulf the entire Russian front. On December 5, Guderian and Bock's panzer advance on Moscow, the prize within their grasp, came to a standstill due to the cold. The delay was to be fatal.

On November 28, a counterattack by the Soviet 37th Army squeezed Kleist's 1st *Panzergruppe* out of Rostov. It was the first time in World War II that the German armies had faced a well prepared enemy attack launched after adequate organization. The immediate result of this setback was that Hitler had one of his tantrums, a direct consequence of which was the resignation of one of his most brilliant generals, von Rundstedt, and his departure forever from the Eastern front. By mid December three Russian commanders—Zhukov, Timoshenko, and Koniev, all later to become famous—were directing massive counterattacks by large reinforcements that were literally marched in from Siberia, and immediately thrown into battle against the German ring of steel around Moscow. And they were succeeding. It was a beginning.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and America entered the war the following day.

I will not forget the Sunday afternoon when the radio broadcast the news. Papi and the boys were playing pinochle in the dining room, Mutti was knitting a sweater, and I was playing records that everyone liked. Between records I switched occasionally to one of the local stations to get the latest news—and there it was. We were all stunned and listened intently for details, and they sounded awful. My long-standing

admiration for everything American made me particularly vulnerable. I had trouble concealing my emotions as the grim news from Hawaii and Washington filled the now silent room.

In the days to follow things became much clearer. No matter how badly the Americans had been hurt at Pearl Harbor, and they apparently were, they would rise to the occasion and would surely make the difference in the end. No longer were Britain and the U.S.S.R. standing alone.

Hitler did not waste time in reacting. The Japanese attack was a surprise to him, too, for he had not been advised beforehand, but its success proved to him once again that the democracies were weak. He had been chafing at President Roosevelt anyway for helping the British with his transparent Lend-Lease program of matériel. So Hitler declared war on the United States, thus foolishly relieving FDR of his problem of how to persuade Congress to declare war on Germany, in addition to Japan. When von Rundstedt heard of Hitler's war declaration, he clasped his head and moaned, "Now the idiot has done it."

As details of the devastation wrought on the U.S. Pacific Fleet filtered out in the next few days, one could sense that the Americans were not only aroused and angry but also grimly determined to fight back—and win. The long, acrimonious debate in the United States about neutrality, the sterile atmosphere of isolationism—actually a very old hallmark of U.S. foreign policy instigated by George Washington himself—but in the light of European developments in the thirties a shortsighted, geo-politically indefensible position—was wiped away overnight, its powerful advocates discredited. America was mobilizing its resources in earnest.

Just as von Rundstedt had feared and Admiral Yamamoto—that brilliant, one time Harvard and Japan Naval Academy trained, reluctant architect of the Pearl Harbor attack—was to say at the time "We have just awakened a sleeping giant—and filled him with terrible resolve." America was now fully committed. While Japan scored one stunning success after another in the Pacific, defeating British and American forces everywhere in the dark months of early 1942, one had the feeling that these setbacks, though painful, were only temporary. Things would change soon. And very slowly they did.

Brazil, like all of Latin America, with the exception of Argentina, was ambivalently on the Allied side. Pearl Harbor sealed that. It was politically too risky to play games with big neighbor Uncle Sam once he was in the war. Raw materials were now shipped in huge quantities to feed the burgeoning U.S. war production. But northbound shipping was facing deadly German submarine warfare, and ships were lost in alarming numbers. As a result, U.S. air bases sprouted everywhere along Brazil's several-thousand-mile-long Atlantic coastline. Navy flying boat Catalinas and Mariners, long-range anti-submarine patrol bombers, protected the shipping and began to find their elusive targets. U.S. military uniforms became commonplace on the streets of São Paulo and Rio. We had a feeling we were all in it and that things were beginning to move in the right direction.

So were our personal lives. Freddie and Robbie had assorted girlfriends, came home quite late on weekends, and never failed to answer Mother's anxious next morning's query "When did you come home last night?" with a terse "After midnight." They had become experts at sneaking in stealthily without being heard, despite Mother's efforts to stay awake reading until all her boys were home. Like most mothers she took a very active interest in their comings and goings, especially the "with whom" and was dismayed when she failed to discover, from two stubbornly uncommunicative sons determined to tease her, whom they were going out with.

About this time we struck up a friendship with a brother and sister pair. It was during a few days vacation at our favorite Hotel Toriba in the mountains between São Paulo and Rio, but they actually lived around the corner from us in São Paulo, a few minutes from our new house. Walter and Hilde Hirsch, formerly of Frankfurt and Luxembourg, had a circle of friends of their own, and we were introduced to a whole new group of young people, all with similar backgrounds, all European immigrants to Brazil. Soon we were going out together, taking weekend trips to the beaches of Santos; our parents met, and a solid friendship developed between the two families. There were frequent dinner and bridge evenings at our respective homes, the men got along well, and the two women kept a wary eye on their children, especially Hilde's mother who early on, before anyone else, was

aware of her marriageable daughter's interest in Freddie, the only one of us old enough for her. To her chagrin, he was also involved with an altogether different circle of friends of his own.

That involvement led to Freddie's announcement one fine day that he was thinking of getting engaged. Mother fell through the floor and immediately wanted to know everything there was to know about the girl and her family. Her worst fears were quickly confirmed: Her prospective first daughter-in-law was a local girl, albeit from a well-to-do upper middle class Jewish São Paulo family of excellent reputation. Mother was instantly unhappy. She had clearly visualized a European daughter-in-law for herself. How was she going to talk to her? Not that she could not speak Portuguese quite well by now. She just stubbornly preferred to speak German. What kind of a relationship could she possibly have with a Brazilian girl? In her eyes, they were so different. Father may have had similar misgivings, but he was too discreet to voice them. He was going to meet this young lady, his son's choice, before making up his mind. And of course Robbie and I could not find anything wrong with the idea, but we didn't count for much in this weighty matter.

The two families met. The girl was absolutely stunning. Young as I was, I could appreciate a pretty girl, and this one was beautiful, vivacious, and friendly once she had overcome the initial shock of meeting her potential in-laws. She had two pleasant older brothers, and both sets of parents tried very hard to overcome the strained and formal atmosphere of the situation. Mother was coldly polite and proper, but I could sense her discomfort, which was never to change. This situation, culturally, was not to her liking and unfortunately it clearly showed. In due course the engagement was officially announced, and a suitable party followed at the home of the bride.

Naturally the relatives and friends of both families were invited, and so Hilde Hirsch, who had long ago set her cap for unsuspecting Freddie, met her nemesis for the first time. Well bred as Hilde was, she was unable to conceal her bitter disappointment. The rest of her family did better, but just barely. And now that my good brother Freddie was engaged to be married to a gorgeous young lady, one barely saw him anymore. He dropped out of our crowd of friends, but Robbie and I felt he had excellent reasons to spend his time pleasantly else-

where. Father was remarkably quiet about it all, but Mother kept stirring the pot by a remark here and a sharp commentary there whenever a suitable pause in the conversation arose. Fortunately Freddie did not hear much of it.

In her defense, especially with the more mature view of the years, I suppose she could not help herself. She was the product of a victorian and authoritarian upbringing, and the fine school she attended during the Kaiser Wilhelm years, the Gaudig Höhere Töchterschule of some repute in Leipzig, did its share to teach her standards that did not fit the changed times decades later. She certainly was not catty, she simply adhered to some inflexible rules carefully taught, and she had not yet learned to make adjustments, as Father had. She learned that only years later, after a major trauma in her life.

Robbie too had found himself a very nice girl in our new circle. A classmate of Hilde from the American Grade School, Clara was a gem, a pert young lady and everyone instantly liked her. Of Hungarian background, she was a good natured, highly temperamental, spirited wisp of a girl, and she and Robbie got along famously. And no objections from Mother either. Something long-term was brewing. Her mother was a lovely lady, as was her impish grandmother, who lived with the family, while her father was a brooding, dour man and very hard to warm up to. He ran that family with an iron hand, and it was clear that Robbie was going to have problems.

That left me, still too young for any meaningful relationships but growing up nonetheless. I was content to enjoy friends as they came, especially girls, without getting serious. Robbie's Clara, whom I liked a great deal, was well connected in the city's Hungarian circles and periodically paraded new arrivals before me, always with a mischievous eye to getting me into a more permanent arrangement. She almost succeeded.

Freddie's engagement, for reasons unknown, began to show cracks, and one day it fell painfully apart. Robbie and I were sad to see him unhappy, and Father was circumspect but most sympathetic. To Mother, however, the breakup was most welcome, and she could hardly hide her feelings. We thought this was grossly unfair and meddlesome. Freddie gradually returned to his former circle of friends and—surprise—little Hilde saw her chance. She wasn't going to let

him get away from her this time. In true style, as determined young ladies are prone to, she carried out her plans to perfection. Although it took a bagful of tactics and a long time, Freddie and Hilde eventually became engaged, and both sets of parents were immensely pleased with this cementing of their already good relationship. Mother was now in her element. Here was communication in the same language, the same background and culture, and future in-laws one knew well and understood.

Freddie and Hilde were married in the mid-1940s and set up housekeeping, now in their own modest home. Hilde was radiant.

In justification of Mother, much as I resented her thinly veiled conspiratorial airs at the time, Freddie and Hilde have had an excellent forty-odd-year marriage to this day and get along very well with each other. They have two fine daughters, Susie and Claudia, two splendid sons-in-law, and a bevy of bright grandchildren.

As for me, Clara did her job well. After several less than successful efforts, she introduced me to Annie, one of her recent Hungarian arrivals, and we took a liking to each other almost instantly. Annie was not only a very nice girl but a very pretty girl. My male friends jealously made jokes about my waiting at the gangplanks of incoming ships from Europe to head off the prettiest girls before they even had a chance. Annie fit well into our family and circle of friends, and she may possibly have been the first young lady I ever thought seriously about.

But her mother had different ideas. Divorced, and having left Budapest alone with Annie, she was not well off financially and had her own plans for Annie to marry soon, and well. I was not the candidate for such a scheme, for I was too young, still going to school. After considerable time of "going steady," Annie's mother managed to move her into other, more mature, and thus more "productive" circles, and she eventually married a very well-to-do Hungarian businessman several years her senior. Regrettably, she was not happy for long, and although I very rarely saw her again in town, Clara kept up the friendship, seeing her friend's life take a steady turn for the worse.

Business was doing nicely; Father and Freddie were a good team. Eventually they associated with a much larger, well financed fur im-

port firm in Rio de Janeiro and became ever more successful. Years later Robbie, having learned his furriers' trade to his satisfaction (and he was always precise), left Arnold Stolarki's friendly employ, without foregoing his well established friendship with him that had blossomed over the years and which included all of us. He established himself in Fur Fashions Ateliér Roberto next door to Papi and Freddie's wholesale fur trading offices on the ninth floor of Rua Dom José de Barros 152, in the heart of downtown São Paulo.

Papi was happy and proud. His two older boys were with him in business, just as he had always hoped it might be some day. The warmth of their relationship and their common purpose was to develop into a successful operation, emotionally and financially. He had made it. He could maintain a good middle class standard of living for his family, and although certainly not wealthy (and far from his prewar standard in Leipzig), he had mastered the painful emigration to a topsy-turvy, strange new country, worlds away in culture, customs and language. For him, the pain of the enforced abandonment of his former comfortable, well ordered lifestyle was over. No more wrenching uncertainties, no more tough years of bitter struggle and hard unending work and worry.

What I did not realize then came to me many years later, when I was forty-two, after I had achieved success myself as CEO of my own corporation in Greenwich, Connecticut. I was the same age at which Father was faced with the grim decision to leave his country and roots, his home, his lifetime friends and his well established life, and take off into the night like a thief with a family of five. I shuddered at the thought of how I might react and ultimately master such circumstances. My long-standing respect and love for him grew immeasurably.

CHAPTER 14

Getting An Education

It remained for Father's youngest son to make something of himself, and no one saw any signs of it. Quite so. I had no idea of what I wanted to do. Still in school, still studying English with a vengeance at the Brazilian-American Cultural Union, still hoping against hope to join the war, I had concentrated my thoughts on reaching that goal to the exclusion of almost everything else. I strongly felt that this was my war, that I knew what it was about, more so than many a GI from Main Street USA. I had seen Hitler on the march, had personally experienced the brutality of the Nazi system, thought I knew what it was capable of, survived nasty street brawls, and carried away many a scar, had witnessed hundreds of thousands of arms joyfully shoot into the air like those of so many puppets in a frenzy of Heil Hitlers, had lived surrounded by a sea of swastika flags on the one hand and whispered, fearful conversation on the other. And finally experienced the bitterness of the utter disruption of our lives.

In retrospect, I was then an inveterate idealist (which, incidentally, I remained for quite a few years of my life and for which I was often to pay a heavy price). But I was not aware of it. It is written that Youth has its privileges, and in my innermost self I was painfully aware of my youthful privilege of having been full of uncertainties, confusion, a degree of aimlessness, and a sense of having lost my roots and direction. I sometimes just wanted to be someone else, somewhere else. I wanted to be unburdened and carefree, felt robbed of my childhood. I had seen so much already.

It was a luxury I could ill afford. As life unfolded, it continued to hammer away and I became acutely aware that I was becoming an adult with responsibilities. In time I was to become less of an idealist and more of a cynic.

Father was concerned about what I was going to do with my life

after I finished *Gymnasium* (a combination of high school and the first two years of college), and I just didn't know. We talked about many alternatives. The only thing I was certain of was that I wanted no involvement with the fur trade, and surely my former skin problems had a good deal to do with that. But I was also vaguely uncomfortable, even as a child, with the notion of killing an animal just to drape its fur around the shoulders of some woman, and I often argued that wool coats kept people just as warm. I think now that my child logic may have caused many a squirm in its time, but Father respected it. The one thing he never accepted was the thought that one of his sons might go back to Europe to fight in a war, after he had made Herculean efforts to get us all out of there. He trusted his intuition that it would never happen. And of course he was right.

We discussed a superior university education, and I might have studied engineering even though I was not comfortable with advanced mathematics. But this alternative was not feasible from the financial viewpoint alone. It would have been nearly impossible to finance such an education under our circumstances, and scholarships were not yet on the scene within Brazil's elitist social framework. An academic education was available only to those who could pay for it. Knowing this full well, I was not going to pursue it further at this time as I did not wish to burden him with such a load. He had enough on his head as it was. Many years later I thought that my indecision, my inability to spell out goals clearly for my future life gave my good Papi many a sleepless night. Whether parents could or should expect their fifteen- or sixteen-year-olds to map out their future careers clearly is another matter. But we both agreed that under the circumstances, once I had graduated I would seek work that interested me, had long-term career implications, and that I would consult with him on any final selection.

It was about this time in 1942 that Siegfried Müller walked into our lives. He was a former industrialist from Bochum who had been forced to flee, leaving his home and family behind in Germany. His Gentile wife had not been allowed to leave with him, nor his two sons who, half-Jewish, would be likely to face an uncertain fate. He was a gentle man, very lonely in the modest rented two-room apartment he occupied and was eager and grateful for a connection with a lively

family such as ours. He admired Father for having taken the bull by the horns so early on in the new country and producing a living for his family. The majority of refugees vacillated for long periods after their arrival, unsure, forever surveying the scene, desperately trying to find themselves a niche before deciding what work to get into. Some had a little money, but most had none, and former professionals, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and chemists alike were leading lives of quiet desperation, their skills unmarketable in their new country. Curiously enough, it was the nonacademically trained, the businessmen, who were the most flexible and adaptable, and the first to get back on their feet. Mr. Müller and Father spent many evenings in our home exploring many approaches on how to make a reasonable living. He almost became part of the family, and no doubt we boys reminded him of his own sons whom he was forced to leave behind.

When Father decided to get out of the cinema business, with its nightly grind taking its toll, a decision Mother applauded most gratefully, Mr. Müller saw his opportunity for a joint enterprise. After much debate the two men decided to establish a children's dress manufactory. The new establishment was given the proud name of Rainha, "The Queen." Despite their best efforts in a field neither knew anything about, both were soon overwhelmed by the many details, the endless number of seamstresses coming and going, sewing machines out of order, needle shortages, constantly changing model designs, and the like. Father's business decision style was sweepingly large. Herr Müller's painstakingly detailed, slow, and methodical. While in theory their skills complemented each other, the business of children's clothes simply did not take off.

Brazil in those years barely had a middle class. One was either very rich or very poor, and the latter were a distinct majority. The middle class was first created by the hundreds of thousands of refugees from Central Europe, who arrived in the 1930s and, unwilling to lower their standards, raised those of the country in which they were building their new lives. They applied fresh ideas, planned productivity, planted new business ethics, products, and services, and above all liberal, humane personnel policies—hitherto largely unknown or considered wasteful by the local business establishment. Although Rainha turned out immaculately produced children's clothing

in commendably good taste, reflecting their owner's own tough standards of excellence, the well-to-do Brazilians disdained purchasing local products which were often shabby and poorly made, and preferred to do their "status" purchasing in New York or Miami. On the other hand the poor simply could not afford the price of quality, nor did they care much about quality or good design and taste. Suffice to say, the new venture was struggling and could hardly produce adequate income for two partners. Father and Mr. Müller amicably parted company. Müller retained Rainha, which suited him, while Father decided to go back to what he knew best, where he was sure of his footing, the fur business.

Siegfried Müller remained a close friend of the family until after the war when he returned to Germany to be reunited with his family, which had survived. But he was to play a unique role in my young existence. He introduced me to my first sexual experience.

Neither of my parents nor my older brothers ever talked about sex with me. What little I knew came from my classmates and much struck me as macho exaggeration. When I was around fifteen, one day window shopping downtown, I collided with a youngish man who tried to strike up a conversation and offered to buy me lunch. Of course I politely refused and tried to be on my way. But he was insistent, right beside me; he bought some chocolate and stuffed it in my pocket before I could protest. My upbringing had taught me not to speak to strangers or accept gifts from them, but it also taught me to be properly polite. I made well mannered small talk, hoping he would go away, but he remained persistently at my side and I became morbidly curious.

As we walked, I uncomfortably but firmly steered our steps toward my streetcar stop. There he announced that—coincidence—he was going to take the same streetcar. I sensed that he wanted to ride with me, no matter what, and was not happy about that, but I felt sure I could lose him in the usual crowd. As we walked past the imposing edifice of the São Paulo University, he announced that this was where he lived and would I wait for him as he had to duck in for a moment to pick up a forgotten item. I saw my chance to lose him and agreed, but he had barely walked through the large ornate doors when he returned and suggested I accompany him the few steps to his apartment.

This was highly suspect. I somehow knew that no one lived in the university building. And yet, curiosity made me join him, albeit very warily. A few steps turned into two broad staircases one flight up, no one else in sight, when on the upper landing, he tried to grab hold of me. I was prepared for something to happen and landed my fist in his face, knocking him down, and then raced back down those staircases as fast as an agile, muscular teenager could.

In seconds I was back on the street and jumped on my streetcar. All the way home I pondered the unpleasant experience but had no answers. That evening I cornered Freddie in a quiet room, related my adventure of the afternoon, eagerly anticipating his explanation of the mystery. To my disappointment he repeated the oft-stated rule of never talking with strangers, upbraided me for letting curiosity get the better of me, mumbled some dark warnings but otherwise offered no explanation. I knew nothing about homosexuality. It took my Brazilian classmates, of my own age, several days later in school, to lay it before me clearly, warts and all.

So, my knowledge of sex was limited, and even though I admired the pretty, well-built girls who abound in Brazil, I wished I knew more of them. Mr. Müller was to take me by the hand. Later on I much suspected that it was at the discreet behest of Father.

Visiting one day, Mr. Müller suggested that we go out on the town some evening, have dinner, talk, and have a good time. We did all of that. Ambling down a street that warm summer evening, leisurely immersed in conversation, which had somehow begun to center around girls and relationships, he stopped at a modern apartment building, rang a bell and explained that he wanted to show me something. I was puzzled but not worried while following him upstairs into an apartment where an attractive middle aged woman was holding the door open for us. As we entered a large living room somewhat gaudily decorated with lots of mirrors, I noticed an excessive number of chairs and couches along the walls. Presently a bevy of scantily dressed, mostly pretty young women appeared, languidly settled on the chairs and sofas, and less than discreetly flirted with us.

This was new to me. At first somewhat bewildered I soon settled into the atmosphere as he and I chatted about this or that young girl and in the course of our conversation he asked if I liked any one of

them especially. Of course by now the purpose of our visit there had dawned on me. He motioned to one of the girls I had found attractive to come over and chat with us, and soon enough I went off with her. Müller, smiling, said, "Take your time," and added that he would wait for me. This is how I learned what at least one of the aspects of the relationship between the sexes was about, and I must admit that the young woman was most kind, patient, and instructive about my inexperience and clumsiness.

As I grew older, and was to repeat this experience often, some light should be focused on the delicate question of prostitution as it then fitted into the Brazilian culture. It is a topic that immediately raises strong emotions and instant, abhorrent rejection in Anglo-Saxon societies, as being base and dirty. It is often in precisely these very societies where, although illegal, it flourishes anyway, but indeed at the very lowest level.

Brazil is a predominantly Catholic country where the Church, very powerful, has historically played a large public role, consistently fostering a most strict moral code. Things have changed considerably since the early 1940s, as everywhere else. But at that time, for a girl, any girl, to engage in premarital sex and ultimately be found out by her father was tantamount to total paternal rejection and being thrown out on the street. Mind you, the double standard of the machismo Latino was (and still is) very much the order of the day, as that same girl's brothers are encouraged and expected to hang as many "scalps" on their belts as they can. With some other father's unmarried daughter, of course. But if one's own sister is involved, the culprit's identity is forced from her, he is searched out, and at gunpoint either agrees to a wedding or else, in which case he gets maimed with a well aimed shot into a predictable part of his anatomy. Similarly, the society tolerates men's extramarital affairs, while their wives, should they do so and get caught, are shot, often together with their lovers. Legally, this is quite all right since the avenging party is defending his family's honor.

Latino men being what they are, girls do get in trouble and whereas mothers often temporarily shield their daughters from their father's wrath, a pregnancy most definitely imposes time limitations on concealment. The horrible scene is played out, the poor girl finds herself

out in the cold, penniless and distraught. (Sounds like a cheap novel but it was quite true.) Where does she find help? Where is she going to find food and a roof over her head? Only in a big metropolis and only with other young women who have gone through the same struggle and will take the stranger in. The only income-producing activity open to them at this juncture is the oldest profession in the world. It is easy, requires no training, and depending on a girl's endowments, can be quite profitable.

The majority of the girls thrown into such a life involuntarily were very pleasant and sweet, often had the benefit of a high school education, worked for themselves and not for pimps, and frequently chose their clients carefully. There was an absence of the crass greed, the hard-nosed behavior, the cheapness of it all so prevalent in the profession in other countries. And they made excellent mothers. Lest the reader assume that I have done some extensive personal research into the matter, allow me to disappoint. But I have traveled the world, accumulated several million air passenger miles, spent countless hours in large airport lounges whiling the time away between flight connections, have slept in perhaps a thousand different hotels in a few hundred cities in almost as many countries and have waited in as many lobbies either for taxis, business associates, or limousines. The opportunities to observe have been endless, being accosted personally or watching others being approached for an unmistakable purpose. Amsterdam and Berlin stand out particularly as do several locations in the United States.

Only in Brazil have I met such young women whose company was enjoyable, whom one could take out to dinner occasionally to a nice place without feeling self-conscious or causing undue notice. And of course, money never changed hands again after the first encounter if a friendly relationship had subsequently been struck up. And yes, Brazil is a country where rape then was comparatively rare.

Sex morals have loosened considerably in this world since then, and I have been a married man for decades. So my priorities in this respect have obviously changed. But I shudder at the present predicament of the younger generation, immeasurably and fatally complicated by the worldwide scourge of AIDS.

CHAPTER 15

From MacArthur to Montgomery and My First Job

December 1941 was the high water mark of the Axis. As it gave way to 1942, the war was not going well for the Allies. Not only were German submarines, the *U-Boote*, successfully operating in so-called wolf packs, extremely active and the Battle of the Atlantic was inflicting very high losses on Allied shipping, but these were also the bitter times of defeat after defeat everywhere in the Pacific at the hands of the advancing Japanese. Having landed unopposed at Luzon in the Philippines the previous December, the Japanese took Manila in January, and U.S. forces retreated to the Bataan Peninsula and the island fortress of Corregidor, waiting for reinforcements that never came. It was merely a matter of time before other landings at Mindanao, New Guinea, Malaya, New Britain, Java, Borneo, and Sumatra placed a third of the vast Pacific under Japanese control and with it went access to rubber and oil, and other rich raw resources, especially in the Dutch East Indies, their prime rationale for waging war in the first place. Japan resented emphatically (not altogether without reason, from their view) that the United States, in outrage over their brutal war on China, had shut them off from oil and scrap iron, materials vitally essential for their economic survival, as well as their ability to make war.

Everyone else's deep concern that Sunday, December 7, 1941, was heartfelt and genuine. A friendly country we all respected and admired, that unique experiment in democracy that had lasted almost 200 years then, seemed to have received a mortal blow (not as serious as was first thought, for the carriers had all been at sea during the attack—and the Pacific war was to be fought with carrier-based air power—but serious enough). Of course no one but a handful of highly placed individuals in Washington and Tokyo knew the actual background of the Pearl Harbor attack. Much, if not everything surrounding that sad episode is known today and has been the subject of a

fascinating book (Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1981), as well as the excellent film "Tora, Tora, Tora."

America's politics were then hostage to a Congress of isolation-minded senators and congressmen, small minded men whose devastating rhetoric—motivated by a mixture of depression economics, political expediency, racial bias, missionary zeal, and just plain ignorance of the world—crafted a foreign policy that was long outmoded. Even a sophisticated president like FDR, who knew better, found it expedient not to counter the trend head-on. He had made a few bold moves toward aiding Britain—he exchanged fifty old destroyers for the temporary use of some Caribbean naval bases, including one on Bermuda, to help fight the submarine menace. He also conceived of a clever arrangement, Lend-Lease to supply Britain with matériel, and managed to get it through Congress, but not without incurring the wrath of its most die-hard members. But he could do no more.

How it is possible that these men in the Congress, who, like everyone else saw the war in Europe unfold and take a disastrous turn for the Western democracies, saw and heard the London blitz through the newsreels and nightly radio broadcasts of CBS's Edward R. Murrow, could still ignore it? What minds could construe all of that as not being clearly an overture, that America would be next? What doubts could remain after the German assault on the U.S.S.R. was unleashed? And that the vast establishment of the State Department, that saw and heard the same, did not pay attention to its own bright minds with geopolitical vision? It is difficult to grasp.

Throughout the 1930's, it was simply business as usual. Everything was allowed to fester. Europe's problems were seen by America's establishment as just that—Europe's problems. Hitler almost enjoyed some manner of support—had he not raved and ranted enough against Communism—America's bête noire? And how he persecuted his Jewish minority—well, that was a German affair—not America's. We would not do that sort of thing here, but. . . .

Meanwhile, America had always had a love affair with China, motivated, to some extent, by the tireless efforts of the China Lobby who also supported American missionaries in that vast and chaotic

country. A general called Chiang-Kai-chek had made himself the ruler of China, and had caught America's fancy which was to last well into the postwar period, upsetting the country's balanced foreign policy in Asia.

When Japan, hostage to a powerful expansionist clique within its government, launched a brutal war of conquest upon the Chinese in 1931, America was justifiably outraged. America's trade interests with China were affected, missionaries were at risk, an American gunboat patrolling (!) in the Yangtze River was attacked by Japanese aircraft and sunk. Finally, America, without the wherewithal to enforce its will, did what a moral nation felt compelled to do. It demanded that Japan cease its aggression in China and withdraw. When, almost predictably, that met with no response, the U.S. position hardened. It took time, but the seeds for conflict, for a Pearl Harbor, sometime, somewhere, was laid then. Animosities escalated, as Japan's war in China continued. Chiang-Kai-chek was unable even to offer serious battle. His government was corrupt, and so were the Chinese warlords on whom he largely depended. There were also the communists under Mao-Zedong, the only other military force of note in China. Jointly they might have offered a serious challenge to the efficient Japanese army. But Chiang-Kai-check, always with a jealous eye on his political standing sometime in the very uncertain future, was too ambitious and shortsighted to allow equal partners. All the while, American policy supported Chiang-Kai-check's position. He and Mao, to the ultimate detriment of China, refused to join forces against the common enemy. Thus were laid the basis for later consequences of gigantic political proportions the world is still dealing with. (see Barbara Tuchman, *Stillwell and the American Experience in China*, Macmillan, New York, 1970).

The murderous Japanese conquest of China, marked by hideous atrocities against civilians, continued unchallenged. American public opinion, specially after the rape of Nanking in 1937, was rightfully inflamed, rhetoric ran wild, trade embargoes followed. Peculiarly, an even greater threat to the world was taking shape in Europe at the time, but it never received much attention from the American establishment. When it came to Europe, non-involvement was the religion of the thirties. It was claimed that most Americans thought of Hitler

and Mussolini as jokes. All the while, America's military lived on a shoestring budget, provided by a recalcitrant Congress that saw no need for more, despite the gathering storm. Over great objections, and mostly due to the commitment of FDR's prestige, was the U.S.Navy allowed funds to build the aircraft carriers that played such a vital role years later.

When, in 1941, after many empty threats to Japan, America dropped the other shoe, an oil and scrap metal embargo, the die was cast. The Japanese perceived it as a real threat to their economic survival. Its navy would only have enough fuel oil for another twelve months. Both sides made the ghastly error of grossly underestimating each other. The Japanese felt the western democracies were decadent, irresolute. Americans thought of them as "the little yellow bastards." And stupid. Could not fly planes because of poor eyesight. And, some bright minds postulated, had an inner ear balance problem that would make for poor pilots. Copied everything Western people did, even their mistakes.

To assure Japan's economic independence, the Imperial staff conceived a bold plan to conquer the oil, rubber, tin and other resources of the Western Pacific. To do so, it was paramount to first destroy the U.S. Pacific fleet. Enter brilliant Harvard and Japanese Naval Academy trained Admiral Yamamoto of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Familiar with the U.S. industrial potential, he warned against such an undertaking. Overruled, he set out to plan it all. Next move: December 7, 1941, and the Pearl Harbor catastrophe.

Certainly it was a dastardly attack, as FDR proclaimed before Congress. Yet, the signs were all there, further enhanced by the military codebreakers' brilliant achievement of having cracked the Japanese Purple Code, Tokyo's communication with its embassies abroad. Including the ones in December 1941 to Washington, where delicate, last minute talks to avert certain conflict were being held between Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Ambassador Nomura and special envoy Saburo Kurusu. American cryptographers read all of Tokyo's communiqués, well before Nomura submitted them to Hull. The last one, sent that week in sections, was filled with cryptic clues that something big was imminent. The codebreakers, alarmed, tried to pass their grave apprehensions along with the decoded material. Official

Washington read it but did not understand. By then, Japanese embassy staff could be observed burning papers in the garden, but except for a handful of junior intelligence officers, no one drew the proper conclusions. An attack on Pearl Harbor had been considered a distinct possibility. (At that very moment, a Japanese carrier group as yet undetected in the north Pacific was fast approaching Hawaii.)

December 7 was a Sunday in Washington, and Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall was out riding in Ft. Myers that morning. Crucial hours were lost, waiting for him to see the intercepted messages. Finally, the War Department decided to warn its commanders in Hawaii. Military radio communication being down at the time, an ordinary Western Union telegram that took many hours through commercial channels, was sent to Adm. Kimmel and General Short, to be on the lookout. For what? For whom? Why? The message deliberately kept them in the dark. Washington felt it prudent not to let on too much, or their ability to read the Purple Code might be compromised. The intelligence officers, who urged a fuller disclosure, were overruled. When the attack took place with incredible precision at 08:00 that Sunday morning, Hawaii time, Pearl Harbor was literally asleep. We know the painful rest. Eventually, Washington made scapegoats of Admiral Kimmel and General Short for unpreparedness.

Nobody knew any of this, then. And we, in far away São Paulo like millions of others, silently wept for the Americans.

Singapore, that British bastion in the Far East, with all its formidable coastal artillery fixedly aimed seaward, was taken from behind by a Japanese army on bicycles. Lt. General Yamashita had, inconceivably, slugged his way through the Malayan jungle. February 15, 1942, witnessed the most humiliating capitulation in British military history. Only a few weeks earlier, two British capital ships, battleship *Prince of Wales* and heavy cruiser *Repulse*, were sunk by Japanese aircraft off the coast of Malaya. It was a bad blow, admitted by Winston Churchill later to be the most shocking news of the war.

February 22, General Douglas MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines; he had been appointed C-in-C Allied Forces Australia by Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall. March 12 he reluctantly embarked with his wife, son, and a personal servant on a tiny PT boat, and left Corregidor for the long and dangerous voyage to

Australia in the teeth of the waiting Japanese navy. To General Jonathan Wainwright, MacArthur's second in command, fell the grim duty of surrendering the starving Corregidor garrison on May 6. The infamous Death March of Bataan became a harsh reality for captured U.S. and Filipino troops.

General MacArthur's departure from the Philippines, ordered by President Roosevelt, has been unfairly characterized as the cowardly flight of a commander leaving his troops behind to face certain defeat. He had no choice but to go and, in the face of the Japanese' horrendous reputation for dealing with civilians, he had to take his dependents. Granted, the general had a large ego, like many brilliant people, but he was a military genius. Eventually, he conducted a spectacular campaign to regain the vast Japanese conquests in the Pacific, from New Guinea to the Philippines, with a minimum of casualties—less than that single major engagement, the Battle of the Bulge, in Eisenhower's European theater of operations. His postwar administration of Japan and the Japanese constitution he authored were most enlightened, but the press saw fit to give a great deal more coverage to his occasional excesses of personal publicity, self-aggrandizement and grandstanding, of which he certainly was fond.

His turnaround of the early debacle in the Korean war with the brilliantly conceived landing at Inchon, on September 15, 1950, was a master-stroke, averting certain disaster.

But back to 1942. In São Paulo, everybody one met agonized over the cascading torrent of bad news. On street corners, in streetcars, offices, cafes. At mealtimes people got together, morning, noon and night for endless analysis, armchair warfare and stupefaction at unpreparedness. I was the unabashed admirer of things American, and I felt like a public defender in a lost cause. No one could understand how the United States, that great, powerful nation had allowed itself to become so unprepared militarily, while Hitler's Germany, bent on conquest, had unleashed a war for well over two years already, that threatened to engulf the world.

At school, with the help of my history teacher, I organized a seminar on the war after classes, and the debate here too sometimes became animated. But I found that my Brazilian schoolmates, even the older ones, were not newspaper readers, were not informed, were just

marginally interested. The project was dropped after a few sessions.

In the Western Desert, Rommel was on the attack. The Afrika Korps lunged toward Egypt. Embattled places changed hands repeatedly as Rommel and the British Eighth Army under General Auchinleck chased each other back and forth across the Cyrenaica. After Tobruk and its vital port fell to Rommel on June 21, Hitler promoted him to field marshal, while the British withdrew to a very strategic place, El Alamein, between the sea in the north and the impassable Quattara Depression in the south. Here, the two armies faced each other inconclusively. But the advance of the Afrika Korps had been halted.

On April 18, 1942, in the midst of nothing but disasters the United States pulled off a major psychological coup. Sixteen Army B-25, twin-engine land-based Mitchell bombers, under one Lt. Col. James Doolittle performed an incredible feat. Taking off from the Navy's carrier *Hornet* in mid-Pacific, they bombed Tokyo, Kobe, and Yokohama, continued their critically fuel-short flight to China, where courageous Chinese peasants rescued most of the crews. Japan's military leaders, who had been sure that the Americans could never bomb the home islands, were unnerved by this exploit, whereas the Allies received a much-needed boost in morale. Even my critics and detractors briefly treated me as if I were personally responsible.

The Russian Front was sheer carnage. The battles stunned the imagination in their ferocity and losses on both sides. Here too, embattled cities like Kharkov, Sevastopol, Voronezh, and Stalingrad were but a few of the places that blasted themselves into the world's consciousness. The German overall strategic plan of having a reinforced Rommel drive through Egypt and Palestine to the oil fields of the Persian Gulf, while linking up with a powerful drive southward from the Russian front through the Caucasus and Persia into Iraq, was brilliantly ambitious. Not only would Germany never have to worry about oil ever again, but the Allies would be shut off from their own sources. It was a menace that could not be countenanced. I was somehow confident this was not going to happen.

In early June 1942 something big happened in the Pacific. Between June 4 and 7 bits and pieces of news came through of a major sea-air engagement near an island called Midway, close to Hawaii. It was

remote, one could not get the complete picture at first, and the general reaction was "What's so important about a few ships anyway?" The fact is, without anyone really knowing it then, the battle of Midway was the turning point in the war with Japan. Despite severe losses among U.S. carrier-based aircraft from Task Forces 16 and 17 under command of Adm. Raymond Spruance, thirty-five dive bombers from the *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* found Admiral Nagumo's task force of four carriers. In five violent minutes, three of Japan's modern carrier force were destroyed, the fourth crippled, together with her most experienced fighter force caught on their ship's decks while refueling. Their dive bombers and torpedo planes, returning from an attack on the American strike force, when *Yorktown* was badly crippled, found their carriers sinking and had nowhere to go but into the sea. Later that day, U.S. Navy planes sank the fourth carrier. The Americans had known in advance of the proposed attack on Midway and were waiting. They had broken the Japanese Naval code. CINCPAC Adm. Chester Nimitz had won the day.

Only much later, when the whole picture emerged, did experienced observers slowly realize that the Coral Sea and Midway engagements were the decisive battles of the war in the Pacific. The offensive back of the Japanese Navy had been broken.

At the time I was fifteen and doing so well in school that I jumped a whole class. It surprised even me, not to speak of teachers and parents. I was going to graduate eventually in 1944 and was now forced to think seriously about what I would do next. What? Neither Father nor the boys, in their joint business operations, could be of much help. Their field of activities was far removed from what I might be interested in.

Clara, Robbie's pert girlfriend, came to the rescue. She was a multilingual secretary in a large, very well reputed São Paulo heavy equipment and engineering company about which she always had some interesting stories to tell: this or that major project her office was involved in. She had inside information that Tecnica Serva-Ribeiro was looking to recruit several competent, bilingual young men to join their engineering department as trainees. It sounded attractive to me, I enquired, had the usual interviews in both English and Portuguese and

was accepted as trainee to start after finishing my studies. After graduating from my tough *Gymnasium* at seventeen in 1944 with the equivalent of two years of college, I joined them.

In this, my first real working experience, I found myself assigned as assistant to one of the half dozen engineering department heads, and went through a tough and precise apprenticeship. There was a whole new world to learn about and to conquer. Everything was imported from the United States, and one could only wonder how the Americans, fully geared to war production, could make available equipment for civilian purposes, let alone for export. It was a testimony to the incredible industrial potential of the United States that, in the end, would win the war for the Allies. Our division handled railroad rolling stock, locomotives, track and signal equipment, heavy road building equipment such as graders, bulldozers, steam and diesel rollers, gantries and cranes, complete brick extrusion plants, and much other equipment that has now faded from my memory. I had to learn about the capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, and applications of all of that machinery, work out precise technical proposals and carefully calculated price quotations to clients. And if our bid was successful, prepare orders to the U.S. plants and correspond about it all in considerable detail over long periods of lengthy delivery schedules with factories busy turning out war matériel. All of these activities were carefully reviewed by my boss, Dr. Amaral, for accuracy and went back and forth between us before he was satisfied. He was a nice, quiet, very precise man but fortunately extremely patient with me, and he taught me a great deal.

But before anything left the company's offices, it had to pass the extremely critical approval of the office manager, one John Colin Scott, a dour but imposing Scotsman and a central figure in the organization. JCS, as he was known, was omnipresent. His initials graced every draft, every calculation, every proposal. So did they grace his frequent ominous little memos brought around by the office boys that said "See me," and you had better be there swiftly, even though one knew it often meant a rigorous dressing down for some glaring inaccuracy. Like a bloodhound, he found everything that was not right and let the culprits know in no uncertain terms. Yet I could not help liking JCS. Grudgingly I had to admit that he was right every

time. He, more than anyone else in my working career, taught me the importance of precise thought, logical sequence of approaching business problems, orderly arrangement of correspondence and proposals. And yes, he taught me to write concise business English that was to stick with me for the rest of my life. He had a knack for making you feel ashamed of your initial sloppiness without hating him too much. Eventually most of us came to appreciate him, as we realized his mean mien was merely an act. And words of praise, accompanied by an almost friendly twinkle of the eye from JCS, rare as they were, came to be prized.

It was a most interesting job, I made many friendships, and of course there was always Clara. One could sometimes have lunch with her, laugh with her, or prevail upon her to arrange for some special piece of office information without having to go through scowling JCS. I now felt that engineering knowledge was essential to my work, and I began to study at night toward an ME. Eventually I was promoted, i.e., given more responsibility, a little more money, and a corner of my own, and found myself translating into Portuguese and writing the technical and training manuals for the heavy equipment we were placing with the Federal Department of Highways for the building of that giant project, the new São Paulo–Santos highway. Through and over the mountain range, from sea level to 2,400 feet, with several tunnels and elegant, tall bridges, it was then and still is today a marvel of engineering design; a safe toll road that cut many miles from the dangerous, frequently fogged-in road originally cut into the mountain flanks and often, unfortunately, the scene of deadly accidents.

Toward the end of 1942, the world began to breathe a little easier. In August, the highly respected British General Harold R. Alexander had taken overall command from Auchinleck in the Middle East. And a new field commander arrived for the tired men now at El Alamein, sporting a black beret with armored corps badge. He reorganized a demoralized Eighth Army, instilled it with a new pride, equipped it with new and heavier British and U.S. tanks, artillery and other support matériel, and quietly prepared for a breakout. This new General Bernard Law Montgomery believed in superiority of matériel, was prepared to wait while taking advantage of the rapidly accelerating

war production capacity of the United States to build up his forces.

In the night of October 23, 1942, the Battle of El Alamein opened with a devastating artillery barrage at Rommel's lines, similar to those the Russians lay on so well. Rommel was outgunned, he was facing another master of tank warfare, and his long supply lines from Libya were now harassed by growing Allied air strength. His Italian sector front positions collapsed as the Canadians, Australians, Indians, and New Zealanders broke through. The Afrika Korps was on the run, never again to resume serious offensive action.

On the Russian front the German offensive was now directed at Stalingrad by Hitler's orders. The entire Sixth Army under General Friedrich von Paulus had been engaged since August in a fierce fight for possession of the city, with the defenders determined not to give an inch. It dragged on all during the late summer and fall until winter set in. The Russians kept moving in reinforcements, and the German Sixth Army, with supply lines overstretched, was in big trouble. General von Paulus requested permission to withdraw and re-form his positions for the winter. The Führer denied the request and demanded that Stalingrad be taken at all cost—one of his disastrous, obsessive decisions, for with the onset of winter a fresh, powerful Russian counter-offensive now chewed up the Sixth Army, leaving von Paulus no choice. His exhausted troops were freezing, starving, bleeding, decimated, and out of ammunition, and he was forced to surrender the remnants. This was Germany's second major defeat that year, and although the war was far from won, the Germans never really recovered after their twin defeats at Stalingrad and El Alamein. From then on, the initiative was in the Allies' hands.

CHAPTER 16

Years of War

As the war progressed into 1943, the Red Army went on the offensive. Things were never going to be the same for the Wehrmacht. By the same token, Stalin insistently demanded that the Western Allies launch a second front in Europe, to relieve pressure on his own armies which were, in fact, carrying the major burden of fighting the German war machine. Hitler still controlled vast stretches of Russia.

But the Allies were not prepared to launch an invasion of Europe before 1944, or even 1945. They did not yet have trained manpower or equipment in sufficient numbers for such a major undertaking. Also, an often bitter debate as to strategy waxed and waned between the two Allies.

President Roosevelt and his general military command were eager to hit the enemy where it would hurt the most, and get the European war over as quickly as possible. There was still a war in the Pacific that needed to be won. The obvious place to start a landing was on the French Channel Coast. Churchill and his chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Alanbrooke, haunted by memories of the stalemate of World War I, vehemently advocated an invasion from the Mediterranean, into what Churchill called the "soft underbelly of France." His purpose here was threefold: by massing forces in the Mediterranean, Churchill wanted to insure the continued safeguarding of British interests in that region. Also, the southern part of France was the least defended. Furthermore, and that was his considerable political foresight, by breaking through from that direction, the Allied forces could cut off the Soviet armies, as these advanced toward the west. The Allies would thus deny them what Churchill had already perceived as Stalin's intention of taking over most of Eastern Europe, and keeping it.

Regrettably, Churchill did not succeed in convincing Roosevelt. The British had become the junior partners in the war. The Americans,

always pragmatic—and influenced by the fact that FDR was not keen on contributing toward the maintenance of Britain's colonial empire—prevailed, and ultimately a landing on the Channel Coast of France was agreed on. None of this was known outside of the leading circles of London and Washington. Nor did anyone know then, that when FDR and Churchill informed Stalin in 1942 of their intention to open the second front, and proposed a timetable of 1943, subsequently postponed to 1944, Stalin evidenced rage and disappointment at the delay. Yet, this was the cold reality of the options open to the Allies.

Meanwhile, as an interim strategy, the Allies planned a secondary invasion of North Africa that year. It had good possibilities for success, although there were some very nagging questions as to where the French armies in North Africa, under Vichy Admiral Jean Darlan, would stand in the face of such an undertaking.

In November of 1942, an Allied force composed predominantly of newly trained American troops and a freshly picked commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, carried out landings at Algiers, Oran and Casablanca. It was a testing moment for the French, and unfortunately Darlan vacillated, but the brief French resistance collapsed. From a strategic viewpoint, the intent was for the Americans to roll through North Africa in the direction of Tunisia, and there catch the retreating Afrika Korps in a vise between themselves and the British Eighth Army advancing from the Western Desert. But in their first encounter with the seasoned Rommel, at Kasserine Pass in central Tunisia, the green American troops sustained a bitter defeat. Hurriedly, a new commanding general was appointed, and General George S. Patton took over American ground forces. A brilliant tactical leader, superbly versed in armored warfare, he proved time and time again a worthy adversary of Rommel. In relatively short order, the Americans swept on to Morocco and met up with the victorious Eighth Army in Tunisia. The field marshal himself, for health reasons as well as for a strategy discussion with Hitler, had just left for Germany, so he missed this final phase.

The Afrika Korps was finished. Its second in command, General Juergen von Arnim, surrendered all Axis forces in Africa on May 12, 1943, finishing that costly and bitter campaign once and for all. Meanwhile, Field Marshal Rommel was appointed by Hitler to take

command of the German defenses on the French coast, the Atlantic Wall. While Rommel busied himself feverishly with bolstering what he considered inadequate defenses against an Allied invasion he could well foresee, the Allies, led by two prima donna generals, Montgomery and Patton (who disliked each other intensely), invaded Sicily. Patton, as usual always on the attack managed (not without some glee on his part) to outrace his more cautious British counterpart Montgomery to the north side of Sicily and beat him into Palermo. When the unsuspecting Montgomery marched a detachment of his valiant Eighth Army into the Palermo public square, bagpipes and all, intending to accept the Italian defeat, a grinning Patton was waiting for him on the steps of City Hall. Montgomery never forgot.

By the same token, the Italians were not happy either. On July 25, 1943, the Great Fascist Council demanded that King Vittorio Emanuel III depose Mussolini, who was arrested. The Fascist movement in Italy collapsed, Marshal Badoglio was named prime minister, and announced continuation of the war on Germany's side.

The obvious next phase was the invasion of Italy across the strait of Messina and that proved a lot more difficult. Well aware of their precarious position, the German OKW had prepared extensive defenses in Italy, appointed a tenacious and loyal commander, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, and placed considerable forces at his disposal. The Allies found the Italian campaign most difficult and time consuming, partly due to the hilly terrain and partly because German resistance had stiffened. Their objective, the capture of Rome, grew ever more distant in time. To overcome this burdensome delay in their plans, a diversionary invasion was executed at Anzio Beach by the Americans, commanded by the Fifth Army's General Mark Clark. Through a number of serious errors, delays, and at the same time good German intelligence, the reception at Anzio was indeed very bloody, and the American casualties heavy; not to speak of some disastrous friendly fire, when an allied airborne attack group found its aircraft shot out of the air by its own air force and flak. Nevertheless, the Italian campaign slogged its way north, and Rome was eventually taken June 5, 1944. That blow proved too much for the war-weary Italians, and peace feelers were put out. Ultimately, Italian Field Marshal Rodolfo Graziani took over the government, concluded a separate

peace with the Allies, and Italy was out of the war—a considerable psychological breach in the Axis. Kesselring, on his part, took very little notice, as the Germans had always viewed their Italian allies' military prowess with a wry smile. All Italian units under German control—in Greece, Yugoslavia, the Eastern front—were promptly disarmed, taken prisoner, and shipped off to forced labor in Germany's armament establishment. Nothing, however, could stop the forward thrust of the Allied troops for long. Not Monte Cassino, not the defenses at the Kesselring Line further north. Eventually, seeing their position as hopeless, an SS delegation contacted the Allies for a surrender of Italy, which was ultimately consummated.

Meanwhile, Allied strength had gained immeasurably, especially its air forces. Germany, subject to air bombardment all along, now became the target of devastating air raids night after night by the RAF and day after day by the U.S. Eighth and Ninth Army Air Forces. Speak of reaping the whirlwind! This air offensive not only seriously damaged Germany's industrial capacity, but cowed its once cheering civilian population. At the time it appeared that the air campaign was succeeding, but postwar investigation revealed that Germany's production facilities, while temporarily gravely harmed, were nevertheless quickly reestablished, moved underground where possible, and ultimately German war production barely suffered. The position of the hapless civilian population was, of course, appalling: raids by anywhere from six hundred to a thousand four-engined bombers round the clock, laying cities in ruins and causing an enormous death toll. But just as in the case of the 1940 Battle of Britain, the German population stiffened its resolve. None of this was of course without its price on both sides—the Allies lost a large number of aircraft to the still efficient German fighter defenses. However, this was soon to change. With the continued deterioration of Axis resources, especially in the key commodity, fuel, the Luftwaffe simply could not keep many of its fighters in the air. The tactics of the air war were manyfold, and eventually the Allied air forces, to overcome their heavy losses in aircraft and experienced aircrews, were able to give their bombers long-range fighter escort: the then famous American P-51 Mustang. It kept the Luftwaffe at bay and eventually reduced it to ineffectiveness.

Parallel to all of these developments, the unrelenting submarine

warfare raged on in the Atlantic. Admiral Karl Dönitz was a wily submariner who developed the tactic of the wolf pack. Losses of Allied shipping throughout 1941, 1942 and part of 1943 were staggering. But thanks to the unprecedented American industrial capacity, which eventually was able to turn out one freighter per day, the Victory Ships, the lifelines to Britain were kept open. And Allied strategy in the Battle of the Atlantic, as it became known, developed new technical breakthroughs in finding and locating submarines. The time-honored convoy system was aided by the addition of baby flattops, as air superiority over the water proved absolutely essential. Gradually, Allied shipping losses became manageable. Allied long-range patrol bombers, of which the Germans had practically none, established air supremacy between American ports and Great Britain. Now the vast quantities of military supplies required for the forthcoming invasion of France were getting through, and the German submarine menace was severely curtailed.

On the other side of the world, by contrast, the tables were being thoroughly turned on the Axis. U.S. Fleet Submarines, initially plagued by faulty torpedoes, were becoming the big menace in the Pacific. Improved ships and torpedoes enabled the Silent Service to devastate Japanese shipping, so vital to its war effort, reducing the country to the brink of starvation.

What follows now has been painful to research, and difficult to write. One does not wish to believe the facts revealed by the documents on which this is based. Nor is it possible here to provide more than a cursory examination of the facts. But history it is, and it, too, belongs here.

Full details are available from many books and official records, as elsewhere herein, but perhaps a sobering source for further reading might be David S. Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews—America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945,* (Pantheon, New York, 1984.) Lest there be any thoughts of bias replacing objectivity, the author is the grandson of two Protestant ministers, and a professor of history, then at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

In the spring and summer of 1942, disturbing news filtered out of Europe. News service correspondents, Swedish and other neutral

newspaper reports gradually allowed the grim realization that the Nazis had put into motion the mass extermination of Europe's Jews. Polish nationals, both Jews and non-Jews who managed to get out of Poland to London, related eyewitness accounts of what was happening in Poland and Russia. In mid-March, a New York press conference by S. Bertrand Jacobson, representative of a major refugee relief agency, and just returned from two years in Budapest, detailed eyewitness accounts which provided an insight into the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Ukraine. Including those by a Hungarian soldier in action near Kiev who saw thousands shot and killed and thrown, often still alive, into shallow mass graves. It was reported by the *New York Times*, although other U.S. newspapers chose to ignore it. On May 18, the same *New York Times* printed the report of Glen Stadler, a UP correspondent who wrote of 100,000 Jews killed in the Baltic States, nearly as many in Poland, and over twice that number in western Russia. The Jewish Labor Bund in Poland compiled a summary of verified massacres and managed to get the information to the Polish National Council in London, with an anguished plea for action.

The persistence of two of the Council's members forced British and American government officials and the news media to take notice. The Bund report was the decisive factor in the first breakthrough of extermination news.

On June 2, the BBC broadcast its essence, including the estimate that until then, 700,000 Jews had been killed. It was picked up in the U.S. and a few papers carried the information. Probably the first was the *Boston Globe* in its morning edition of June 26, although relegated to the bottom of page 12. Exceptionally, it wrote that "a systematic campaign of extermination of the Jews in Poland had resulted in the murder of more than 700,000 in the past year." That evening, the *Seattle Times* published much the same, on page 30, under a tiny headline "700,000 Jews reported slain." On June 27, the *New York Times* gave the story two inches. Not until July 2 did the *Times* publish (on page 6) a full summary of the Bund report. The rest of the media ignored it.

It was not until early July that the State Department began to inquire into the massacres on its own, and received confirmation from various other sources in Europe. A rally of 20,000 crowded Madison Square Garden to protest the Nazi atrocities. Various speakers—Rabbi

Stephen Wise, Governor Herbert Lehman, Mayor LaGuardia, the Methodist bishop Francis McConnell, and William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor—addressed the gathering. President Roosevelt sent a message expressing the sorrow of all Americans. A companion message from Prime Minister Winston Churchill expressed similar sentiments. Other mass meetings followed in Chicago, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Hartford and other cities. Everywhere, mayors, governors, congressmen, labor leaders and spokesmen for the Christian churches joined Jews in expressing sorrow and indignation. In Cincinnati, more than a hundred Protestant ministers endorsed a public statement that expressed insights that should have been obvious, but which seem to have gone widely unrecognized in American Christian circles during World War II:

> "This is the tragedy of your European Jewish brethren but it is also our Christian tragedy.
> This is an evil suffered by those of Jewish faith but it is also an evil perpetuated by men of Christian names and Christian pretension."

The mass meeting undoubtedly had some effect on the American public's hitherto nearly complete ignorance about the Jewish catastrophe in Europe. But while the daily press coverage now became more widespread, it usually was buried in the inner pages, and covered the meetings, omitting the cause: that hundreds of thousand had been murdered. In fact, Jews were barely mentioned and the events came across as no more than "mass demonstrations against Hitler atrocities." The *Chicago Tribune*, while giving comprehensive coverage, offered little understanding of what had caused the Chicago meeting. The *Los Angeles Times*, on the other hand, publicized the demonstration in Los Angeles for more than a week, and made it clear throughout what the real issue was.

As the weeks and months progressed, more disastrous news about the Jews of Europe filtered out. The increasingly grim persecutions and round-ups in Slovakia, Belgium, The Netherlands clearly indicated a pattern of planned extermination. The news from France indicated not only complicity of the Vichy government, but its actual hands-on cooperation, despite increasing resistance by members of the

French police ordered to ultimately deliver 14,000 French Jews to the Nazis. Local American relief organizations, through their home offices, appealed to a recalcitrant State Department for 1,000 visas for Jewish children. Through the active aid of Eleanor Roosevelt and the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, the plea was successful. State cabled its consuls in France accordingly, with instructions to hasten the process. As the dire reports from France increased, the relief agencies asked the State Department to raise the number to 5,000. By the end of September, State had reluctantly complied.

But the great difficulty was extracting exit visas from the Vichy regime. As the children were being collected and readied, a sleight-of-hand game was played out in Vichy. Laval had agreed "in principle" to the exodus. But when dealing with his underlings, a combination of German pressure and Vichy recalcitrance had shifted the ground. Throughout October, Vichy stalled. On November 8, Allied forces landed in French North Africa, Vichy severed diplomatic relations with the U.S. and the entire project ended precipitously. Altogether, the role played by France, then and later, was abominable.

Seventeen months of systematic, cold blooded murder ran their course between the time the *Einsatzgruppen* were turned loose on the Russian front, in June of 1941, and the day in November 1942 when the full extent of the extermination plan for the Jews of Europe was confirmed to the world.

The Nazis perpetrated their genocide program for nearly a year before the Jewish Labor Bund in Poland recognized what was happening, and managed to send an alarm to the outside. Two months later, at a time when approximately 1.5 million Jews had already perished, Dr. Gerhardt Riegner, representative of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, was informed about a prominent German industrialist, whose position in the German war economy also gave him access to confidential Nazi sources. He had come to Switzerland, carrying news of a Nazi plan to exterminate all of Europe's Jewry. His revelations to a Jewish friend were relayed to Riegner. It was checked out and, to the horror of the small circle involved, found to be truthful. Riegner went to see the U.S. Vice-consul Howard Elting, Jr. in Geneva, who found him extremely agitated, and the information "too fantastic to believe." Riegner asked Elting to transmit it to Washington and other Allied

governments. When the American legation in Bern received the summary for forwarding to Washington on August 11, it added that it had no information to confirm it, and that the report had the "earmarks of war rumor inspired by fear."

The Washington recipients, middle level officials of the State Department Division of European Affairs, dismissed the Riegner disclosures as totally unbelievable. In fact, here was solid proof that planned annihilation was in motion. Three more months of calamity for the Jews of Europe then passed before Western officialdom accepted the facts. In those three months, about one million more Jews were killed. Train after train rolled from the Polish ghettos and from western Europe through the suffocating heat of summer, the chill autumn nights and the numbing cold of November to meet the timetables of death.

November 1942 marked the pivotal month in this tragedy. On the 24th, Rabbi Stephen Wise held a press conference with the shattering announcement that the *Endlösung* was in full motion. It was now available to everyone in the democratic world who cared to know. But the news media gave it little prominence. Metropolitan newspapers did a mediocre job of informing the public, and when they did, it was buried on the inside pages. In the entire country, only five papers placed the story on the front page. It was not big news. Essentially frivolous human interest stories found front page space easier. It was to become the rule, and muffled the historic news. A few clear statements from FDR would have moved it into public view, but the president was not so inclined. Not even during his then customary twice-weekly news conferences, and the Washington reporters did not press him. The State Department remained conspicuously silent. When queried by editors whether it could confirm Rabbi Wise's disclosures, State would not allow its answer to be published. It had no statement to make on the matter.

With isolated exceptions, the churches of America notably remained on the sidelines. So did the American political establishment, which had gained considerable conservative strength in the November congressional elections. Voices were now being heard from various Jewish and non-Jewish quarters, calling for measures of rescue, assistance, official condemnation, warnings to the Nazis, opening

up the (largely unused) immigration quotas to allow refugees that could still be saved via neutral countries, to be snatched from certain annihilation. But southern Democrats and northern Republicans were adamantly opposed to immigration, with full support of the State Department. Not only that, but State did its best to keep the issue under wraps. Despite full confirmation at its disposal, State never confirmed it. On the contrary, State deliberately conveyed the impression that the news could not be confirmed, may not be true, and suggested to those openly involved with it, to tone it down. The OWI, the Office of War Information under Elmer Davis declared itself unable to publicize the information as long as it was not government policy. If the State Department had issued the news of the extermination policy, OWI would certainly follow suit. This was of course doomed to fail.

As time passed, more shocking information seeped out of German occupied Europe. Again, the same Dr. Gerhardt Riegner in Switzerland, on February 14, disclosed intensified Nazi efforts, that six thousand Jews were being killed daily at a single location in Poland. State relayed a copy of the telegram to Stephen Wise, accompanied by a letter from Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Wells, with its usual disclaimers of official responsibility for its truth. The disavowal was undoubtedly engineered by the same group in the Department's Division of European Affairs, composed of acting chief Ray Atherton, assistant chief John D. Hickerson, and Elbridge Durbrow, who had been trying for months to check the spread of the earlier information from Riegner. They, together with the Department's advisor on political relations, James C. Dunn, authored a telegram, over the signature of Sumner Wells, to the U.S. legation in Bern, severely reprimanding it for allowing its official facilities to be used for such "private" messages (actually, the Department relayed hundreds of private messages from Switzerland to American business firms).

Riegner's message also referred to the fact that of 130,000 Rumanian Jews deported in 1941 to the Transnistria region, 60,000 had been killed. The remaining 70,000, destitute and dying of starvation, were just waiting to be killed. Only a day before, on February 13, 1943 a dispatch from Cyrus L. Sulzberger in London appeared in the *New York Times*, disclosing that the Rumanian government had offered to cooperate in moving these 70,000 Jews to any place of refuge

chosen by the Allies. The Rumanians suggested Palestine, and in return, asked to be paid transportation and related expenses amounting to 20,000 Rumanian lei (about $130.00) per refugee. An opportunity to rescue a large number of European Jews seemed to have materialized. The Rumanians, obviously opportunistic and unsure of an Axis victory, hoped to shift themselves into the good graces of the Allies. Bucharest was badly mistaken in assuming that the Allies would consider the release of 70,000 Jews an ingratiating gesture. In fact, the American and British governments looked upon any release of large numbers of Jews as a threat, not an opportunity.

There followed an investigation by the State Department into its veracity—and it was indeed a valid proposal, even if it smacked of blackmail and bribery (records at the Nürnberg trial confirmed it.) Yet, Sumner Wells responded to it for the State Department: "This story is without foundation." Both the American and British governments almost cursorily dismissed this first major potential rescue opportunity.

The record is a dismal one. No matter which part of the American Government eventually was involved in the many suggestions for rescuing the Jews of Europe, difficult as that became with the passage of time, the response was always the same on all levels: indifference, thinly veiled excuses, outright deceit, lack of knowledge, hostility. Even the proposals made in the later stages of the war, to bomb the extermination apparatus at Auschwitz, as well as the railroad lines leading to it, to at least slow down the accelerating killing machine, met with rejection by the War Department. It was deemed out of range, a diversion of military resources to non-military objectives. Powerful arguments in a world at war. And conveniently perpetuated by the many who were opposed to doing anything. But untrue. The U.S. Fifteenth Air Force, based in Italy, could and did accomplish it repeatedly. By the same token, the Allied military moved 100,000 non-Jewish Polish, Greek and Yugoslav civilians to camps in North Africa and Middle East, and maintained them there, yet refused to consider accommodating Jewish refugees there for a variety of imaginary reasons. The Allied armies in Italy supplied thousands of refugees with food, shelter and medical care. But to the American military, political and diplomatic establishment, Europe's Jews represented an extraneous problem and an unwanted burden.

Auschwitz, Warsaw and other targets deep in Poland were, of course within range, and were bombed, but not the camp and its killing machinery. Only the nearby plants at Blechhammer and Monowitz.

In the fall of 1944, Jewish women who worked at a munitions factory inside Auschwitz managed to smuggle small amounts of explosives to members of the camp underground. The material was relayed to male prisoners who worked in the dreaded gassing and cremation area. Those few wretched Jews then attempted what the Allied powers, with their vast might, would not. On October 7, in a suicidal uprising, they blew up the crematorium buildings. There were no more gassings in Auschwitz after that.

No one in Brazil had any more than the merest superficial knowledge, if any, of these events, mostly through an occasional American news weekly. They, like much of the American press, certainly did not provide more than snippets of information. And the Brazilian press did not bother to pick it up.

So, while the Russians were grinding down the Wehrmacht on its front, inflicting and sustaining terrible casualties in the process, the Allied air offensive were grinding Germany into bits and pieces and all along, the preparations for the invasion, Operation Overlord, proceeded. By the end of 1943, so the joke went, the only thing that kept the British Isles from sinking into the sea from the weight of the American troops, stored tanks, trucks, jeeps, ammunition, bombs and all of the deadly paraphernalia required for a total war, were its barrage balloons which could be seen floating all over Britain.

It is entirely too much to go into the massive details of the planning for Overlord, and its execution. Riveting books have been written by very knowledgeable people, who take this incredible undertaking apart, analyze and explain it. They make fascinating reading. But the simple fact is that Overlord was the most gigantic single military undertaking in history.

D-Day came on June 6, 1944, on the Normandy coast of France. By a series of German miscalculations and misconceptions, the German High Command, at Hitler's express orders, held back several

panzer divisions from Normandy, despite Rommel's and von Rundstedt's urging. OKW, deceived by carefully disseminated Allied disinformation, was convinced that the "real" invasion would logically come at the narrowest width of the Channel at Calais. The Führer slept late at Berchtesgaden the morning of that fateful day, and his aides were unwilling to disturb him, so that he could be apprised of the invasion, and authorize the release of forces stationed near Calais. Contrary to Rommel's theory for beating back the invasion—that it was crucial the Allies be thrown back into the sea at the very moment of landing—the element of surprise and the confusion so carefully engendered by SHAEF were at least partially responsible for success in holding the beachheads and penetrating inland on that first day. The world held its breath at this gigantic effort, the unspeakable bravery of the paratroopers and soldiers of the landing forces, kept its fingers crossed, and the joy was felt around the free world. The Allies were successful, the invasion was secure. Soon enough Allied troops battled their way through France, Belgium, and the Netherlands to the Rhine, and Germany itself. Finally the end of the war was in sight.

There remained one last nasty surprise the Führer was planning. In the late fall of 1944, Germany was still able to marshal very substantial forces for a breakthrough of the Allied lines, and it had found a weak point in the Ardennes Forest. SHAEF considered it a quiet zone, that had become an R & R area for battle-weary troops. Planned in great secrecy, this German winter offensive was designed to cut the Allies off from their prize, the Port of Antwerp, vital to the unloading of matériel, and to cut the already long supply line from conquered Cherbourg and the Mulberry harbor at the Normandy beaches. The offensive was fast, hard driving, and initially successful, and it was totally unexpected. It became a cause for grave concern at Allied HQ, as U.S. troops were quickly overrun by massive Waffen SS armored assaults. Bitter cold hampered the troops on both sides, but the cloud cover grounded Allied air power. Those troops who still remained dug foxholes and did their best to wait it out in the fog.

What became known as the Battle of the Bulge, the single most bloody engagement following D-Day, came to a standstill at the small Belgian town of Bastogne, stubbornly held by tough American paratroopers of the 101st Airborne, totally encircled and running out

A regime tries to hang on, even if the war is obviously lost. A young German deserter has just been executed in Oldenzaal, the Netherlands, during the British advance.

of ammunition and supplies. In a quick, urgent meeting at SHAEF, General Patton, who by this time had gained a reputation for audacity in battle, took on the urgent task of relieving the besieged paratroopers at Bastogne. Driving his Third Army relentlessly over a great distance from his positions in France, battling terrible weather and heavy snows, Patton managed the impossible. Breaking through the German lines, his Third Army relieved the men at Bastogne. Meanwhile, the skies cleared, and Allied tactical air units were able to get airborne again. The stalled German units were heavily strafed; and their winter offensive was broken. It was Hitler's last gasp in the west.

As Allied troops reached the Rhine, the U.S. First Army miraculously found the bridge at Remagen still intact, and without much hesitation sent forward patrols across to secure it before the Germans could blow it up. It was one of those unexpected coups. Years later, when I lived in Bronxville, New York, I found myself the neighbor of a middle aged couple, where the husband had been part of that First Army handful who secured the Remagen Bridge. His account of those hours was chilling.

Now the Allies were rolling their tanks into Germany and fighting on German soil.

The Wehrmacht's will to fight on the Russian front had long since been broken. The Soviet armies, having freed their own country of the invaders, rolled into Poland. Then they stopped. Dimly outlined intentions already apparent then, it was nevertheless difficult to comprehend this Soviet delay in their advance. In fact, they were deliberately waiting for the German occupiers to finish the grim job of eliminating what was left of the Polish underground which was loyal to the Polish Government in Exile in London. Indeed they were. The Soviets wanted no Poles left who might offer resistance to the Soviet occupation to follow.

While a ground war was raging on the fronts, east and west, another kind of war took place over the cities of Germany. It was that war of droning fleets of heavy bombers relentlessly filling the skies, the combatants Allied air crews, already tired from long hours in the air, now facing heavy German Flak, tense as they prepared for their bombing runs which would expose them even

THE END OF THE NAZI STATE

Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, appointed by Hitler as his successor, is being arrested in Flensberg, North Germany. With him, Col. General Alfred Jodl and Armament Production Minister Albert Speer, follow him into British captivity.
Photo © Imperial War Museum.

more to the bursts all around, tense from watching others, their fellow aircraft, being hit, exploding, plummeting down. Please, God, let it not be ours!

On the ground below, in the cities, the people, aside from the innumerable Flak gun crews, were mostly civilians. Women, children, and old men, too old to serve in the last ditch effort, the *Volksturm.* And, in the later stages of the war, untold numbers of refugees from the east, fleeing from the approaching Soviet armies.

From below, the scene was one of shrill air raid sirens; desperate dashing into bomb shelters; unspeakable fear; bombs falling, exploding, devastating; buildings collapsing; raging firestorms.

It had happened so often before. The Luftwaffe had rehearsed well at Guernica during the Spanish Civil war. Earlier in Wolrd War II, it had set the scene with Warsaw, Rotterdam, Coventry, London, among others. The Allies had returned the attention they received then tenfold.

Hamburg, Cologne, Schweinfurt, Stuttgart, Berlin, Leipzig, Freiburg. . . the target list in Germany was long, the devastation immense. Late in the war, in February of 1945, as the Soviet advance was rolling into Germany itself, the Allied air forces attacked a German city that had never been bombed before. Dresden. Respected for its beauty, it was a gem of baroque architecture, had little if any military target value other than being a key railroad center. It had been left unscathed. That was to change dramatically in the night of February 13, 1945.

What follows is the eyewitness account of a then eight-year old girl. As it leads to the terror of that night, and many subsequent ones, it also gives us a revealing look at life of a German family during the Nazi regime. And significantly, how they were treated by their countrymen after they had miraculously survived the bombing of Dresden and managed to flee West to the only family member still left alive.

Fifty years later, that little girl, now a grown woman, has still not been able to put those experiences behind her. She ducks at low flying aircraft, gets visibly upset at war movies, especially the sound of air raid sirens, and is fearful of large fires. She hoards food, is loath to throw anything away, keeps her important documents in a safe deposit

box at the bank, not trusting them to her desk at home. I should know. That little German girl today is my wife Brigitte.

The earliest memories of my father are rather vaguely those of a kind, fun-loving man my brother and I used to enjoy, if only for a terribly short time of our then very young lives. One day, I was told, there he suddenly was in a field-gray *Wehrmacht* uniform, saying good bye. I was only two. And Peter four. The year was 1939. From that moment on, he became an increasingly remote person in my life I would only hear about from Mother through letters he wrote home. From places like Poland. France. Russia. Oh, yes, he came home from time to time. As I witnessed it in our jubilation, the moment he appeared in our Dresden apartment's door frame on the few so-called field furloughs granted him, he would rapidly jettison his uniform, the overseas cap, the belt, unbutton his jacket with the *Feldwebel* insignia, get out of his boots and pants, dropping them in successive heaps on the floor of the long corridor as he entered, to finally embrace, in his underwear, his little family. His next steps were into the bathtub. Peter and I were usually somewhat shy at first, in the background, but observing everything. After all, he was practically a stranger, but he was kind, tried to be jolly, and above all, he was a novelty. His rare appearances in our lives were, for Peter and myself, not much different than those of his three brothers, all equally in uniform, who came to visit infrequently. Hubert, the oldest, an engineer; Gerhardt, an architect and Georg, the youngest, inducted into military service right after finishing his *Abitur* before planning to enter a University. Their visits were always fun, cause for parties and much horseplay we loved, and for me, these men we indistinguishable from Walter, my father. As time, and the war I was as yet only remotely aware of, wore on, my father became an abstract figure in my life.

My family came from Oppeln in Upper Silesia, a medium sized administrative center and regional capital. I later learned that Grandfather, an estate manager for a wealthy landowner,

fell in Verdun during World War I. My mother Elizabeth, from an Oppeln family, met father there and eventually married him. He worked for a farm-oriented newspaper, rose rapidly, and early in 1936 was promoted by his boss to circulation manager, with an implied move to the paper's main offices in Dresden. A large responsibility. He was all of 25. And he caught the Nazi Party's attention. They approached him and made clear that it would be "advantageous" for him and his career if he joined the party. However, they made it also clearly conditional on his leaving his Church. A Catholic, he was rather repulsed by both propositions and refused to join, unlike his older brother Hubert, by then already a long term party member from the early street brawling days, who was "mysteriously" spared front line duty for years, until it too caught up with him when he was ordered to the Russian front.

Having gone on to Dresden alone at first, with a company car and driver at his disposal, he found and furnished a house on the *Wachberg* and had it all ready for mother and Peter to move in. I arrived in April 1937. In the summer of 1939, with his call for the compulsory one-year military service hanging over his head, he and his boss agreed that perhaps his work would best be served if Father unburdened himself from his military obligation first, in order to be able to dedicate himself fully to his new managerial assignment without interruptions afterward. Thus, Walter Wojciechowski donned a *Wehrmacht* uniform for a year and temporarily left his family.

In September 1939 war broke out, and Mother only heard from him again when he was already fighting in the Polish campaign. He had been assigned to the *Pionere*, the army engineers. The military had kept him, of course. Like almost everyone else already in uniform. Father never got out of his. After Poland came the campaign in the West. He sent gifts from Paris for all of us. I remember that I got a pair of black patent-leather shoes that were too big, and Mother said I had to grow into them. And after that he was sent the Soviet Union in June of 1941. No gifts ever came from there.

Alone, raising two small children and constantly worried, Mother lived from day to day, from one cigarette to the next. And from letter to letter. And she received many. As she told us later, these gradually became more introspective. The initial optimism for an early end to it all, and return home to us, gave way to deeper religious thoughts. 1941 became 1942 and Stalingrad. Mother was worried sick. His letters never allowed a clue as to his whereabouts. And then 1943. In one of his letters he wrote of having been offered the option of becoming an officer. Mother wrote back that she did not care whether he remained a noncom or became an officer as long as he returned safely home. He preferred to remain with his buddies as a noncom. The intervals between mail from the front became longer. Mother lived anxiously waiting out the weeks between Father's letters.

In 1942, the owners of our house in Dresden on the Wachberg, a pretty, hilly suburb of the city, requested Mother to exchange quarters with them. They lived in a spacious apartment in downtown Dresden on the Schlüterstrasse 17, and wanted to get back into the suburbs and gardening. So a move was arranged and we came to live in the city. It was now easy for Mother to take us to the opera and see *Hansel and Gretel* and the great *Circus Sarrasani.* It was also in this apartment that Mother had failed one April 20, the Führer's birthday, to hang out a Swastika flag from the balcony's flagpole. In no time a couple of brownshirts were ringing the doorbell incessantly, and once Mother had opened, berated her crudely for her failure, ordering her to display her flag at once. The move to downtown was to prove a fateful development.

September 1, 1943 was an eventful day in my life, my first day in school. Late that afternoon, when I had already come home, the doorbell rang. Mother sensed instantly, as the impeccably brown uniformed man in the doorframe threw a brisk *Heil Hitler* at her, what it was about. With terror in her heart she stiffly inquired as to the reason for his calling on her, while

Peter and I peered curiously from behind her skirt. Father had been severely wounded in action that August near Briansk on the Russian front, during a gigantic tank battle around Kursk. He had subsequently succumbed to his wounds and died a hero's death for Germany. This party official had come to express the local party organization's condolences. Mother kept her composure as best she could, while the man eyed her curiously if coldly, waiting perhaps, as she said a little later, for her to break down and say uncomplimentary things about the war, a serious offense known as *Wehrkraftzersetzung* (undermining the war effort). Containing herself, she briskly inquired if there was anything else he had to communicate and since there was not, curtly invited him to leave. Peter and I did not really grasp the implications. So we had no father anymore. We barely knew him anyway, and since such news were rather common in Dresden at the time, and even young children could not help overhearing them, Peter and I busied ourselves with Mother who cried bitterly the moment the door closed. Within minutes, Mrs. Schubert, the neighbor, a war widow herself, appeared and consoled Mother as best she could. What Mother had feared all those long years of war had come to pass.

A few weeks later, a letter from Father's company commander arrived for Mother and she barely had the courage to open it as she held it in her shaky hands. It is now some fifty years later and I have that letter in my possession. It is an object lesson in how the system was able to systematically pervert the minds of its people. While the writer, a Captain, merely carried out his painful duty of Company Commander for probably the hundredth time, and that far more sympathetically than that officious party clown who came to the door, the letter, full of aching details and giving the burial site and grave number in a military cemetery near Briansk, is also studded with hackneyed party line phraseology like hero's death for *Führer, Volk* and *Vaterland*, a better tomorrow for his children, etc. etc. After four full years of front line combat

duty that must have been a living hell, here was his eulogy from the system that had fed him to the fire like other millions of brave and frightened men, like so much firewood. Mother never spoke of that incident ever again. Sometime later a package from the front arrived with his personal belongings, including Father's wedding ring, which Mother wore until her death.

Now totally alone with two small children, Mother answered the call of the rest of the family in Oppeln to wait out the war there. Aunt Emma, the kindly spinster matriarch of the family who owned a very large house in Oppeln with a pub on the ground floor had called all the Wojciechowski wives with their various children to come and live with her. There were the wives of two of the three other brothers. And a bevy of children. For the first time in my life I had a large family, playmates, and I loved it. As a matter of fact, we were so many youngsters that I could disappear without my absence being noticed. We were all well cared for, and for us kids it was ideal. The atmosphere was warm and congenial. Mother and Aunt Emma became the focus of my young life. War or not, the countryside showed little effect of the ever stricter food rationing. Formidable Aunt Emma had her farm connections, and there was not only plenty to eat, but also a larder full of smoked hams, bacon, wines and *Sekt* under her strict lock and key. She had set aside a substantial share of it for the *Victory Party* she was sure of celebrating once the nasty war was over.

Mother, the only one of the Wojciechowski wives with professional training from a secretarial school, was officially assigned to work at some party administrative agency in downtown Oppeln. The other women busied themselves looking after us children and helping Emma run the pub. Those of school age had to board an open truck every morning, to an outlying school considered safe from air raids, which had come to Oppeln by then. I was always terrified of the open truck ride, the school had practically no teachers, and we did not learn much of anything. My playmates were my cousins

and other children on the street. One day I was yanked away from playing with a timid boy who lived down the street, and told never to speak to him ever again because he was Jewish. I did not understand why, but had to obey that forceful command. Soon thereafter, he and his family were gone. I never saw him again. When I innocently asked about him, I was told they had moved away.

Every once in a great while, all three of Father's brothers would make a brief furlough visit with us in Oppeln. It was always cause for a celebration. Both Gerhardt and Georg would eventually share their brother's fate. The system was busy making widows and orphans, while conducting what to most, especially the veteran soldiers who whispered about it, now seemed a lost cause. For now it was late 1944 and Oppeln filled with refugees from the east, fleeing the advancing Soviet troops. The directive came down that all able-bodied civilians, men and women, were to report for digging trenches and tank traps on weekends. Also, that the children were to be taken west to safety, but that the adults who took them there must report back within days. Thus it came that Mother, who by some insight, had maintained our apartment in Dresden, prepared Peter and me for the trip. In Aunt Emma's pub, Mother had accidentally met a fairly high-ranking SS officer, commander of a nearby prison camp, who pleaded with her to take his wife, her mother and two children to Dresden with her, while he remained behind. She did not feel she had a choice. Follows now one of those quirks of the disciplined, well indoctrinated German mind. After a few days in Dresden, Mother was making ready to leave us there in care of these strangers, obviously privileged, and obey the party directive to return east to Oppeln, and report herself as back. Conditioned as she was, she never questioned the insanity of that order, with all the chaos then reigning. When she arrived at the railroad station for the trip back, she learned that there were no more eastbound trains. It was out of her hands.

It was now January 1945 and the battle lines were getting

closer to Oppeln. The *Wehrmacht* had blown up the bridges across the Oder. Artillery fire could be seen in the east and with it, panic set in among the civilian population. Suddenly, Aunts Emma, Else, Hilde and some of her family and the children stood in the door of our Dresden apartment. They had become refugees. Their trip was most arduous. To get across the partially frozen Oder river, now without bridges, to reach the railroad station on the other side, all these women and children walked across, jumping from ice floe to ice floe. Mother managed to bed down everyone in our apartment except for Aunt Emma, who would have preferred to stay with us, but for lack of space ultimately stayed with her well-to-do bachelor brother who owned a textile factory in downtown Dresden in the *Altstadt*. There were now fourteen people living in our apartment. The building's *Luftschutzwart*, or resident air raid warden, a small privilege that fostered large egos, usually reserved for loyal party members, a bachelor who lived in a large apartment all by himself, loudly complained to Mother that she had entirely too many people in her apartment, how many more was she planning on? Mother, young and brash as she was then at thirty-two, simply asked him how many of these refugees he would like to take in? That was the end of that.

The eastern front was collapsing rapidly. Oppeln would soon fall to the advancing Soviet troops. Dresden was now overrun with refugees all trying to flee west. The city's normal population of 600,000 had swollen to over a million. No more school for us. There were no teachers and the buildings had been converted to field hospitals. The adults were busy foraging for food, whatever the meager rations now allowed. Then came the night of Tuesday, February 13, 1945.

It was almost 22:00. The drone of big bombers approaching became increasingly more menacing. Dresden had seldom been bombed before; so it was assumed these aircraft would, as usual, pass overhead to some other distant target. Also, with all those refugees crowded into the railway station and the

Grosser Garten, the large public park nearby, it was unthinkable. But the RAF meant deadly business. By the time the air raid sirens howled around 21:45, it was already too late. That night saw one of the most devastating air raids of the entire war. Dresden was obliterated in a firestorm, killing untold tens of thousands. As we huddled in the basement serving as improvised air-raid shelter, amid the noise, the explosions, the heat, the dust, the debris falling in the cellar, the buildings above us in flames, the fear was palpable. A phosphorus bomb landed exactly in front of the cellar window, less than a foot away. As we watched in horror waiting for it to ignite, it was almost immediately extinguished by falling debris. Explosive bombs, falling with that awesome, fearful whistling, went off outside, both far and close by. We quickly learned that if you heard the explosion, it was not on top of you. Every other moment in that rain of destruction, all of us, perhaps thirty or forty people crammed into that cellar, hit the floor. Some soldiers had come in to seek refuge from the streets. After all, it was Carnival Tuesday and bigger than usual crowds had been out on the town. There was not much else to celebrate. As they huddled with us civilians, they groaned that this was infinitely worse than hours of artillery barrage at the eastern front. Throughout this time Mother put her arms around us as if to protect us. I heard her whisper "If we have to go, we go together." During a momentary lull, I tore away and crawled to the cellar window to look out. Across the street I could see a blackened building, all its windows gone. Flapping about in that swirling heat and air rush of explosions were all the white curtains fluttering in and out of the windowless frames as if fingers of death reaching out for its victims. My childish imagination was working overtime. I can see them to this day. When the raid finally appeared over half an hour later, Mother resolutely managed to organize a handful of people into a fire brigade, to leave the shelter and fight the flames in the roof of our building above us. Everyone said she was crazy, but went with her anyway. As they fought the fires somehow, they witnessed the most awesome destruction around as far as the eye

could see. Most, including us children, remained huddled below. It was then that the few still working sirens warned of another attack.

It was now almost 01:30. Mother and her fire brigade returned hurriedly. The second wave, even larger than the first one, rained more hell and fire on the mortally wounded city. The firestorm that now assumed incredible fury, especially in the *Altstadt*, consumed everything. It was to be the end of Dresden.

As the second wave had passed about 02:00, there was no "all clear" signal anymore. No power, no sirens, no water to fight fires, few people left alive. Only rubble and fire. And the dead outside, and under the collapsed buildings, by the thousands. Mother had had enough. She rose, grimly determined. "We are leaving," she announced. "We were going to make it to Stuttgart." Where she got the courage in the face of the firestorm raging all around us I will never understand. Back to the apartment, miraculously still standing, to get a few essentials. Else was to come with us. And a very old lady in her nineties. We called her "Starka," Polish for grandmother. The other women, at first reluctant, now got up their courage to leave also. A baby carriage in which I kept my cherished doll Ursula was quickly filled with belongings. The doll was in the way. Over my protests Ursula was quickly discarded to make room. I was terribly distressed. She was my favorite. I never wanted nor ever had another doll for the rest of my life. During the harried gathering of seemingly valuable possessions, one suitcase of one of the recently arrived women fell to the floor and opened. To mother's fury, its contents were revealed as food and smoked sausages, which had never been shared with anyone, despite the fact that Mother had taken these people into her home under desperate circumstances, and food was very hard to get. Never mind. There were ten of us now. But before anything else, she was also determined to get Aunt Emma, staying with her brother in the *Altstadt*. She had been in our home for dinner only the evening before. Mother

wanted to take her to Stuttgart too. That effort proved futile. After clambering over the rubble for only a few blocks, we were turned away by firemen and rescue squads. Behind them was sheer carnage. No way through. Poor Aunt Emma, my godmother I loved so, would never see her Victory Party. She, like most others in the *Altstadt*, perished in the firestorm.

Numb as we were, we hung on to Mother. Bundled up in everything we could wear, pajamas under jogging suits and an overcoat, and with little else, only our vital documents in a briefcase, Mother took us all out of the burning city, Peter and I each clutching one of her hands. It was awful, and yet, my age, then barely eight, did not allow me any real awareness of the dimensions of the catastrophe around us. We trusted Mother and that was that. We slowly clambered our way through the burning rubble, crashing balconies, hot asphalt, flaming and collapsing buildings of this once proud and beautiful baroque gem of a city. Surrounded by the stench of burning corpses, hot cinders much like snow furiously swirling through the air that barely allowed breathing, we had to rest. In what was left of the *Rotermund* park, huddled with our backs against a still-standing wall for protection against the hot sparks, at one point Peter and I spotted one of those huge cylindrical gas storage containers and speculated idly among ourselves when it would explode.

Then it happened. Mother, huddled on the ground, clutching us and her briefcase, singed by cinders, covered with soot, now had her long suppressed breakdown. In those few hours of relative rest at that wall, and in the dawning hours after the attack, the realization of it all had come together and crashed down upon her. She had lost her husband. Her family. Two homes. Her country in ruins. Lived through two awful bombing raids. Now totally alone with two small children for whom she was responsible. Her recent past experiences, the horror of the moment, and her future melted at once into a terrible, frightful uncertainty. She faced a great emptiness, was at her

wit's end. Sobbing uncontrollably, the tears flowed and Peter and I did not know what to do to help her. Mother was never the same after those dreadful hours in the swirling cinders and flames of Dresden.

Now Starka, the old grandmother, gave up. Exhausted, she refused to move another step. Two of the women stayed with her. We did not stay much longer. Mother pressed on. Mechanically. Away from that burning city, she urged everyone. Eventually, Mother found a swollen refugee trek heading west, and we joined it. And walked. Soldiers occasionally fed the endless line of numb and tired human misery from their *Gulaschkanonen*, the army's portable kitchen wagons. Already out of the city, now February 14, about 12:15, we heard more massed aircraft approach. This time it was the Americans, to finish off in daytime what the RAF had started during the night. The mass of refugees barely looked up any more, but instinctively quickened their exhausted pace. Those who did stop to look, saw the city in its final death throes.

I began to stutter. An affliction which was not to leave me until I was fifteen. Mother's desperate goal was to reach Stuttgart and her sister Magda who lived there. Magda would find room for us. Also, it was sufficiently further west and south. We trudged along. There were people lying in the ditches right and left, either exhausted or dead. I did not know. And suitcases, bundles, all manner of discarded baggage much too heavy to carry far. Mother was silent. That evening we reached Freiberg, where a friendly farmer took us, total strangers, in for the night, providing beds and food, including that rare commodity, real milk, for the seven of us. I simply could not eat a bite. That evening we watched the eastern sky. It was brightly illuminated by the fires of Dresden. Next morning, only four of us remained, Mother, Else, Peter and I. Aunt Hilde and her two boys had, insanely, returned to Dresden to look for her family and the Starka. Miraculously they had survived and found each other at a pre-arranged site in all that

destruction. We joined the never ending refugee trek again and trudged onward. At one point Mother managed a ride for us in an army ambulance for a stretch. After that, more trudging, including the sudden fright of an apparent low-level air strafing threat by American fighter planes. They buzzed us, but did not fire their guns. The pilots obviously looked over that miserable pile of humanity, and flew on. They were so low we could see their faces and goggles. So it went on, as days and nights merged into a numbing nightmare. Eventually we reached the outskirts of Hof around 01:30. Mother found a *Luftwaffe* station, and decided to look for help. The harassed men in blue looked horrified at our appearance, of which we were unaware. We had soot covered faces and hands, singed hair, clothes full of burn holes. Our origin, Dresden, filled them with apprehension. They had heard. They beseeched Mother to leave immediately, as an air raid was expected. Mother followed their urging, and we made for the small railroad station and a rest, while Mother tried desperately to find out, what if any, westbound trains were running. No more regular train service. Trains ran when they could, and that mostly at night, to escape allied aircraft. During that anticipated air raid only minutes later, we huddled under the shelter of an underground railroad passageway. Later that night, a west-bound train arrived. They were only a few people at the station then. Mother maneuvered us aboard. Somehow, the four of us had an entire compartment to ourselves. No windows of course. All shattered. It was bitterly cold. But for once we sat down again. And we children instantly went off to sleep. I recall very little of that train ride that would eventually take us to Stuttgart. Or how long it took. Probably dozed most of the time. Just remember sudden starts and stops, especially in daylight. We were to arrive in Stuttgart one morning around 07:00. Still dazed, Mother marched us out into a city that had been severely bombed. But nothing like Dresden. Some streetcars were still operating intermittently and took us to Magda, who had never really known whether we had survived Dresden. She feared the worst, but she had also hopefully prepared for our

arrival, and was very happy. And we had made it. And had a roof, however damaged, over our heads. We were home again. Or so we thought.

At 12:00 that very same day, as we were in an exhausted sleep, the air raid sirens howled again. Another bombing raid. Once more into a shelter, this time a nearby mine shaft. Would we ever be able to sleep without bombs falling?

We did not understand the world of the grown ups, and while they all had suffered, yet declared themselves innocent of it all, they somehow must have had something to do with it. Of course, we did not know much about anything then, but Peter and I sensed, I suppose, that something awful was afoot and we wanted it to stop. Innocent questions directed at the adults produced no answers. For years afterward, no adult could be found willing to talk about the war. The subject was assiduously avoided. And Mother and I, in the years to come, were never able to talk about it all. She just simply clammed up. As children, after the horror we had just experienced, Peter and I wanted nothing so desperately as a normal life again. Would we ever have one?

Soon enough we were to learn otherwise, and were deeply hurt. As we played in the streets close to where we lived, we ran into other children doing the same. And met adults. Upon hearing that we had come from bombed-out Dresden in the east, they yelled after us *Flüchtlingspack* (pack of refugees) or *Polaken*, a commonly used pejorative for Poles, long a nation vilified by the Nazis. We could not understand these insults. After all, we were Germans like themselves, and had gone through a hell far worse than Stuttgart. They could not even imagine how bad it had been. They obviously did not try. The *Flüchtlingspack* label would stick to us for many years to come, as we grew up. Everywhere we went, everything we did in those hard post-war years to get back on our feet was colored by such remarks, caused us to be treated like second class citizens that somehow were not deserving of their own

accomplishments. Mother, while trying to forget, never forgave them.

Fifty years later I still have trouble coming to grips with that attitude that prevailed then. And upon growing up and finally learning a great deal about my country's past during the Nazi period, I can well understand how the Jews of Germany must have felt when they were vilified. Were these nasty Germans who yelled after us the same people who beat their Jewish neighbors and greedily took over their possessions?

Why them? Why us? Even if I had no part in all that went on then, other than becoming a victim of a system that deceived us all, I occasionally have some grave misgivings about my country of birth, when I see or hear of Germans today who apparently have not learned their lesson from it all. The futility of it all is appalling.

Not long thereafter, the Soviets too were fighting on German territory. The two Allied armies gradually moved forward toward a historic meeting in the small town of Torgau near Leipzig. Soviet soldiers and American GIs closed ranks and shook hands, a shining moment, but short-lived. As the Allies moved inexorably closer to the enemy's capital, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the four-term president of the United States, died in Warm Springs, Georgia on April 12, 1945. He was replaced by his vice-president, Harry S. Truman. Dr. Goebbels waxed delirious. Now Germany would win the war!

Finally, the Russian armies under General Zhukov were in the outskirts of Berlin battling last-ditch tenacious, house to house resistance. The fall of Berlin was now a matter of days. April 30, 1945, in his bunker under the Reich Chancellery, Adolf Hitler committed suicide together with his new bride, Eva Braun. So did Dr. Goebbels, who gave his wife and six little girls cyanide pills before he shot himself. The Führer's body, drenched with gasoline by his personal driver, was (partially) burned in the garden of the chancellery. How prophetic. It all started with massed SA marching through the night with burning torches. It ended with Berlin afire, and the Führer consumed by flames.

The collapse of Germany was now at hand. Its surrender was taken in a starkly simple act in a schoolhouse in Rheims, France, on May 7, to become effective May 8, 1945.

The European war was finished.

The joy and relief of the Allied participants and the rest of the free world was enormous. The most terrible conflagration of the twentieth century was at an end in Europe. It proved to have cost the world 60 million casualties. And the Brazilians, who had finally joined the war actively and sent a division to fight in the Italian campaign were of course relieved. Anyone who read the exuberant Brazilian press in those days could get the impression that Brazil had won the war single-handed.

For all of us, who had watched the beginning of this scenario unfold before our very eyes starting in 1933, it was a time of intense satisfaction, tempered by the knowledge of the untold brave men and women who had given their lives for this moment. And by the recent, sobering, discoveries of Nazi atrocities that had long been hinted at and ignored, but were now finally before everyone's eyes in the newsreels.

CHAPTER 17

The Horror of It All

The euphoria that gripped the free world in the early months of 1945 signaled to all that the end was in sight.

Yet, after all those horrible six years of war, it was soon tempered by another dark chapter to be unveiled in man's history, not only of that time but for all time to come.

Fifty years ago, on January 27, 1945, the Soviet Army in its drive toward Germany came upon and liberated the infamous extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Alfred Stirner was a survivor. His parents, his wife and his son were murdered there.

Soon after the war ended, Alfred Stirner, while in New York, related his experiences to the noted journalist John Hersey. It became part of a book, no longer in print. I never saw it.

But on January 20 and 27, 1995, his account appeared in two successive editions of the German weekly *DIE ZEIT* to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Much as I and many others have learned in the intervening years about the Nazi paranoia with the Endlösung, few accounts to come out of that chamber of horrors are as clear, as concise, as dispassionate as Stirners. I might not have seen it, if a friend in Germany had not sent it to me. I owe him a debt of gratitude. And to *DIE ZEIT*, for being in the forefront of Germany dealing with its past.

And very special thanks to Norbert Wollheim, whom I discovered in a multi-faceted international telephone search through several countries. Now an elderly gentlemen living in the New York area, and the true identity behind the pseudonym "Alfred Stirner, Auschwitz Inmate No.107.907," I am indebted to him for having graciously allowed me to share his experiences as I came upon them, with a new generation of readers.

Alfred Stirner was a young Berlin intellectual, a former law stu-

dent, a would-be social worker who spent the fall of 1941 behind a welder's mask. Not only did it protect him from the sparks, but it also concealed his identity. He was twenty seven years old. He lived with his wife Lena and small son, Jacob, in one room in a small Berlin blue-collar apartment building crammed with 120 other people. When they went out, they could only use smaller side streets. They absolutely had to keep from ever being seen on major streets or avenues of the city under penalty of immediate arrest for deportation to a KZ. They were forbidden to enter bookstores, hairdressers, and barbershops, barred from shopping for clothing, and for three years had not attended a concert, been to a movie, or seen a play. Their food shopping was restricted to very specific stores. They were prohibited from using public transportation, streetcars, buses, trains.

In order to be at his place of work every morning at 06:30, Alfred Stirner had to get up at 04:45, since the walk to his factory took longer than one hour. The Stirner family had to wear the yellow star of David on their clothing that told everyone that they were Jews. Their room had no telephone. A radio was forbidden. The family ate a never-varying diet of cabbage, black bread, potatoes, and beef suet. Ever since the beginning of the war, the one single window of their room was covered for blackout. Jacob, their little boy had never looked through the open window to see a starry night sky or the lights of the city. One of the first words he learned to say was "blackout." Nevertheless, the tiny room on the third walk-up floor was home to a family. Along one wall there was a couch which the three people shared at night. To watch Jacob grow up with all the optimism of a child that had no reason to believe that the world was ever different, gave his parents joy and much needed strength.

When Adolf Hitler had come to power in 1933, Alfred Stirner was nineteen years old and a student. At that time there were two factions among the Jews—one that had immediately decided to emigrate—the other with long-term strong ties to German culture who were convinced that Hitler was only a temporary aberration that could not last, and who wanted instead to anchor their roots in German soil. Alfred Stirner's parents belonged to the latter. Even after Chamberlain's ill-fated meeting with Hitler in Munich in 1938, the Jews in Stirner's circle still clung to the belief that they would merely lose some of their

civil rights to survive the Hitler nightmare. It took the events of Kristallnacht on November 9-10, 1938, as German mobs burned synagogues, ransacked and torched Jewish-owned businesses, desecrated cemeteries, and beat up and killed many Jews in the streets, for them to realize that henceforth the Jews of Germany had to countenance more than degradation and dehumanization. Also brutality.

The Jewish community began to prepare for the mass emigration of children to England, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Stirner gave up his studies and worked within an organization that carried out these Children Transports. He traveled repeatedly to England and Sweden. With the thought of getting both himself and his family out of Germany, Stirner managed, in his spare time, to have himself apprenticed and ultimately certified as a welder. By August 1939, the organization had arranged for 7,000 children to get out of Germany. With the onset of the war in September hopes of Stirner and his family to leave the country were dashed. He began to supervise a number of small vocational training facilities for Jews officially sanctioned by the authorities due to the growing need for a specialized labor force. Alfred Stirner hid his identity behind his welder's mask.

The first mass deportations commenced in October 1941. In a munitions plant Stirner was assigned to carry heavy blocks of raw steel and steel sheets. In addition to the constant fear of deportation came the bombing raids by the RAF. During 1942 one deportation transport after another departed Berlin—to Riga (Latvia), Lublin, Warsaw (Poland), and Minsk (U.S.S.R.). Stirner and other Jews, not yet picked up by the police, only heard rumors about the fate of those deported: that some transports never reached their avowed destination; that a KZ named Theresienstadt (Teresina in Czechoslovakia) was set aside for elderly Jews. (It was made a showplace to demonstrate to the world that Germany had no intention of harming or separating Jewish families, but in-between Red Cross inspection visits, it was a hellhole like the others.) During that year, the Gestapo came to question Stirner on six occasions. Each time he was saved by his papers which certified him as welder.

When Stirner knocked on the door of his parents' home on December 8, 1942, a Christian neighbor reported agitatedly that the SS had come and dragged his old parents away, giving them a mere ten

minutes to get ready. Stirner never saw his parents again. Much later he learned that they had been assigned to one of the first transports to a new camp in Oswiecim, Poland. The Germans called it Auschwitz.

Shortly after the New Year, Stirner felt as if every day would be the last. His sister Rose, scheduled to be deported together with his parents, was ordered to stay in Berlin instead, because she was a competent secretary with first-rate shorthand. She moved in with Alfred, Lena, and Jacob, sharing what little the family had. Stirner allowed himself to wallow in self-deceiving optimism. A colleague of his at the plant, married to an Aryan and thus permitted to have a radio receiver, got up every morning at 02:30 to listen to the BBC, in and of itself an offense punishable by death in Nazi Germany. Every day he whispered to Stirner the latest news, and the reports about Eisenhower's progress in North Africa or the successful defense of Stalingrad all renewed his courage and hope. In those days he used to tell Lena, "It is a race between our fate and Hitler's." February 25, 1943, Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels agitated the German populace with his famous speech in the Berlin *Sportpalast.* "We have made preparations to destroy the enemy in our midst. We promise him to wage total war."

The very next day Rose Stirner came home after work with the rumor that on the following day, February 27, something very momentous was going to occur—she had been unable, however, to find out what this meant. Stirner had observed during previous deportation raids that men were picked up in the factories where they worked while their wives were picked up in their homes, so that family members frequently lost sight of one another. He decided to stay home on February 27. His sister could not stay—she simply had to go to her job. Around noon a friend arrived and told the family that SS members had come into all the factories where Jews worked and rounded them up. Other SS combed the residences of Jews and systematically arrested the families found there.

At 16:00, two Gestapo men came to his door and announced that they all had ten minutes to get ready and accompany them. Jacob, then three years old, was asleep. Stirner's wife, Lena apparently quite unafraid, managed to get the Gestapo men to allow her forty-five minutes to rouse and dress the child. As the Stirners left their tiny

room for the last time, the Gestapo men affixed a seal, next to the star of David, on the door, forbidding entrance in the name of the Gestapo. Once outside they saw an SS truck with six armed SS soldiers. For a moment Stirner was overcome by panic, thinking that they would be killed right then and there. But his wife, with the child in her arms, walked toward one of the soldiers, who motioned her to get into the truck. They climbed aboard together with other rounded-up Jews. The door was closed and the vehicle proceeded. It stopped three or four times to pick up other Jews. Since they could not look outside, they had no idea where the truck was going. It was cold. The truck seemed to drive around aimlessly, stopping frequently. Throughout it all the child slept. Altogether it took some six hours, during which Stirner held Lena's hand while they whispered to each other, mostly about their lives prior to the war. They felt encouraged by at least being together, while most of the other people in the truck had been separated from their families.

Finally they seemed to have arrived at their intended destination. As they climbed down, they found themselves at a location they could not recognize. It was dark. Many people from several such trucks were herded, together with their baggage, into a cavernous shed where they heard the din of many voices. There was almost no space left. Above it all the bellowing orders screamed by the guards. It looked as if they were to spend the night in this place. There was no water, no lights, no sanitary facilities, no food, and barely room to lie down on the floor.

By morning rumors flew wildly among the subdued crowd. Around noon Rose Stirner suddenly appeared, wearing some kind of red badge—officially designated temporary camp helper—which allowed her continued free movement in Berlin. She managed to talk the guards into allowing her to take her brother and his family into her temporary camp, where conditions were somewhat better than in the large shed. A little later she also managed for them to be, like herself, appointed camp helpers. Carrying out the duties assigned to them, they were thus able, for nine days, to search for friends, pass on messages and reunite several families. All throughout this time one transport after another left Berlin headed east.

During the night of March 2–3 came the first major night bombing raid. After the "all clear" had sounded, they all looked back, not

without some satisfaction, upon the burning city of Berlin. "Nero's Rome," Lena said. Stirner wistfully expressed the hope that the rail lines had also been destroyed. But they were not, and five days later, the Stirner family was listed for transport eastward.

On the morning of March 9, Alfred Stirner was handed an official document that informed them that, due to their "inimical attitude toward the Third Reich, their property was confiscated, and they were being deported." Even three-year-old Jacob received such a document. On March 11, they were loaded into cattle cars by members of an SS detachment. Sixty people per car. Someone locked from the outside the large sliding door of the car where Stirner and his family were. Inside there was nothing but a bucket for a toilet. In the side of the car was a fist-sized air-hole. The sixty people in the car were of all ages—men, women, about a dozen children. Despite it all, the Stirner's were not despondent. Had they not managed to stick together with a group of old friends from their Jewish Youth Organization to which they once belonged? As his wife had said earlier, the worst fear was that of separation.

As the train of cattle cars rumbled along, the people inside attempted to ascertain its course by peering through the airhole and reading station names. All they could determine was an easterly direction, but not on major rail lines. Stirner's wife wrote postcards to friends ("We are going east. Are in good spirits. Keep strong") and dropped them through the air-hole. Postcards from earlier transports had been picked up, taken to a post office, and ultimately delivered. Jacob behaved quite well, was curious about everything. When it became clear that their train was moving through Silesia, Stirner and his wife reminisced about their honeymoon to Silesia in 1938. With their friends from the Youth Group, they spoke of common acquaintances, speculated over how long they would have to stay at their unknown destination once they arrived there. Someone sang a song from their Youth Group days.

It became dark outside. Someone observed that it was a Friday night, the eve of the Sabbath. A woman produced a candle, lit it while everyone in the car watched in utter silence, some in tears. An elderly man said some prayers, and although Stirner was not an Orthodox Jew, he and all others were deeply moved.

The next morning someone spied the station sign "Katowice" through the air-hole, and everyone in the car was certain that their destination had to be Oswiecim, Auschwitz. Little was known about this relatively new camp. On the 12th of March, at exactly 16:00, their train stopped at the Oswiecim railroad station. Everyone was strangely calm. Stirner's wife took his hand into hers. They both felt certain that the next few minutes would be crucial.

After a while the door of the cattle car was opened, and they saw a large field in which stood a group of SS officers and soldiers, some of whom came to the car and brusquely ordered the Jews to clamber out. The SS soldiers drove them mercilessly, much rougher than the SS back in Berlin.

Everyone had to throw their personal baggage on a growing pile, and that was the last Stirner and his family saw of their carefully selected and packed rucksacks. Some officer yelled at them to form into three groups—healthy, strong men to the left, women without children in the middle, and mothers with children, elderly, and the sick to the right. His wife whispered "That is what I was afraid of all along." She kissed her husband, and he kissed Jacob. "Stay strong," he said to her, "I will be with you."

As they separated, they attempted to keep each other in sight, but in that large mass of people he soon lost Lena.

All healthy men were divided into groups of five and had to march past a huge, tall officer. He asked each of them two questions and his thumb, depending on the reply, flipped either up or down, as in Nero's days in Rome's Colosseum. As Stirner stood before him, the question shot out: "How old are you?"

"Twenty-nine."

"What is your profession?"

"Welder." The thumb flipped up.

Trucks arrived and discharged groups of men in black-striped clothing and caps, who were ordered, under armed guard, to enter the newly arrived cattle cars and clean them out. They carried out the excrement buckets and, to Stirner's surprise, several dead bodies. It was then that Stirner saw how other trucks, some distance away, were being loaded with the groups for whom the thumb had flipped down—the mothers with children, the old and infirm as well as all those who

had not gotten past the muster of the thumb. He craned his neck to find his wife, and as a loaded truck departed he saw that Lena had somehow battled for a place at the very rear gate and was waving to him. She made some desperate signs, although she appeared to be smiling. She lifted Jacob and let him wave too, but the child could not pick out his father in that crowd.

Somewhat later the trucks returned empty, and the SS guards, screaming and irritated as if they were threatened animals instead of masters of the situation, drove the men in Stirner's group into climbing aboard. When his truck was full, the SS herded the men together with rifle butts and squeezed in twenty more. They could barely breathe. The trucks took off in an entirely different direction from the earlier one. Stirner attempted to speak with the two SS guards who stood on the running boards, but these barely understood German. Some of the Jews who spoke Slavic languages determined that the guards were Poles of German extraction. The truck convoy drove through a Polish city, past a giant factory building under construction, larger than the Leuna Werke or any other Stirner had ever seen, and then the trucks drove around a sharp bend, revealing a huge camp containing endless rows of wooden barracks surrounded by a double row of clearly electrified barbed wire. At regular intervals Stirner could discern watchtowers manned by guards with machine guns.

As they passed through a heavily guarded gate, Stirner turned to two of his friends from the onetime Youth Group, Kollin and Wertheimer, and whispered, "May God help us to get out of here alive."

The trucks drove into the camp, and the guards ordered them to get off. A man in a uniform Stirner had never seen before—military boots, green riding breeches and jacket, military cap, and a sleeve band with LA for *Lagerältester*, or camp elder, stood before them. An inmate with rank. By now it was almost dark. The camp elder and other inmates in identical uniforms ordered them to enter an empty brick barracks and wait. While they stood around exchanging whispered opinions and assumptions, they heard a bell ringing. The uniformed ones directed a group of about twenty to go into an adjoining room. Some of them now circulated among those still waiting, offering some food in exchange for valuables. Even though he was quite hungry, Stirner decided to keep his watch and ring. One after another, groups

of twenty were directed into the other room. It was finally Stirner's turn. His group had to walk past a large trunk into which, upon clear orders by two SS, they had to throw their watches, rings, money and any other valuables they possessed. When one of the men protested, Stirner overheard the SS man bark, "Here one does not need anything." Subsequently, they were ordered to strip, and everything, except glasses, belts, and shoes, was taken away. Then came barbers who clipped all hair from heads and bodies of over two hundred naked men. Others sprayed the prisoners with a pungent disinfecting agent, after which they were pushed into shower rooms, where they waited for some time in the cold of March. There had been rumors circulating in Berlin about the "showers" in concentration camps, which in reality were gas jets, and one of the men created a stir when he yelled, "Now it's all over."

While they waited anxiously in the showers, they noticed several people in striped uniforms hurry back and forth, carrying out errands. Stirner's group stopped one of them and asked "Where are we?" Emotionless, the man informed them, "You are in KZ Auschwitz. Did you see that large factory? That will be an I.G.Farben plant to produce methanol and Buna and that is where you will work. You are prisoners. That is your situation."

Someone asked, "Where are our wives and children?" The man—Stirner later found out that he was a well-known anti-Nazi from Hamburg—replied very quietly: "Do not think about your women and children. They must go their own way. Here, you have to go your way. And if you keep thinking about what you cannot change, you will not have enough strength for your battle here. If you want to survive this, listen to my counsel. Otherwise you will never be strong enough. Some of us have been prisoners for years already. We were in Buchenwald. . . Dachau. . . Oranienburg. . . throughout which time you had the fortune of being with your families. Think about how lucky you are to have arrived so much later than us; and stay strong."

Finally, cold water began to spout from the overhead shower heads. Since every one of the men was already very cold, they could tolerate it. As a matter of fact, it almost seemed to warm them up. Supervisor inmates gave them torn underwear and striped pants and jackets, just like the outfit the man from Hamburg had worn.

Stirner was assigned to Barracks 2, where he was met by another supervisor inmate referred to as the block elder, who led him and his barracks mates into a large room with wooden walls, some 90 feet long by 15 feet wide. It contained nothing but wooden, three-tiered sleeping bunks in three rows. Stirner, his friends Kollin and Wertheimer, and a few others had thus far managed to stay together. Exhausted, they now climbed onto the hard wooden bunks on which there was nothing but sacks of straw and two thin blankets. Even though it was late into the night no one was able to fall sleep. Amidst tossing and turning, Alfred Stirner shivered, wide awake, through the night.

In the morning they were loudly driven from their wooden bunks at 04:30 and, trotting through a wet snow, taken to a washroom—a brick shed equipped with eight faucets, which hundreds of men fought to get to. "Keep clean," the block elder had admonished them earlier, "we expect that from you." There was no soap or towels, no toothbrushes or toothpaste. Finally they had to march to a large, open square toward which the entire camp seemed to rush and where they were told to stand in rows of five. For what seemed an eternity, they stood in the snowy rain in their lightweight striped jackets and pants while SS troopers walked past the square formations and counted.

When the counting was finally completed, Stirner and his companions, all newcomers, were led back to their barracks in order to go through a registration process. In reality, this meant filing past a supervisor inmate who, by means of a needle dipped into blue dye, tattooed a number onto each man's forearm. Alfred Stirner's number became 107.907. Their line now filed past several other Supervisor inmates seated at rickety little wooden tables demanding to know from each one of them their number and profession. Stirner, standing before his interviewer, informed him that he was a certified welder. Noting his gold-frame glasses (usually worn by the academically trained), they demanded to know about his work experience. Stirner insisted that welder was indeed his profession, while avoiding any mention of his law studies and social work activities. Shaking their heads in disbelief, they eventually wrote down his profession as he had said.

Now, his inmate number was stamped onto two pieces of white linen, one for his jacket and one for his pants, and out of two triangles,

one yellow and one red, a star of David was formed. Stirner had noted already that all inmates and many of the Supervisor inmates in Auschwitz wore patches on their jackets, and he now learned that red denoted political prisoners, yellow for Jews, black for social outcasts, green for convicted criminals, pink for homosexuals, and so on. Most of patches were yellow, only a handful were red. The remaining majority were green.

After another *Appell*, standing in formations on the large square to be counted, Stirner was now able to eat his first meal since the sandwiches his wife had prepared in Berlin. He stood in a line to the dayroom of Barracks 2, the last room, in which lived the block elder and his assistant together with two or three Supervisor inmates. The barrack's supervisor inmate, subordinate to the block elder, dished out the food from large cauldrons, and he handed Stirner a rusty bowl into which he had ladled a thin, grayish liquid. He was ordered to take off his cap and several boiled potatoes were dumped into it. He was given a spoon. Stirner quickly learned not to go near the Germans with the green triangular patches, the convicts, who acted superior as if they were of royal blood. Even some of the influential Jewish prisoners, called the "prominent ones" and easily distinguished by the cleanliness of their uniforms, exhibited an air of superiority. Stirner could not stop agonizing over his wife and little boy. He tried his best to imagine that they were going through the same procedures as he, only somewhere else in the camp. Once he asked one of these inmates about the women and children, and the man answered gruffly, "We have been here for years, and we never ask after our relatives."

By the next morning, the ground was frozen. It was still dark as the inmates crowded into the washrooms, and Stirner, like most of his newly arrived fellow inmates, had a bad cold. On that morning, the *Stubendienst*, the barracks duty team, distributed breakfast outdoors: a chunk of bread, a dab of margarine, a thin wafer of sausage, a cup of ersatz coffee; and as each man received his meal his number was checked off, to prevent his going around twice. As the inmates ate in the cold, they huddled together like sheep for body warmth.

At the crack of dawn, they were marched once more to the large square, called the *Appellplatz*, now frozen, for the morning count. The cold wind mercilessly whipped through their lightweight striped

uniforms, and the counting procedure seemed endless. Finally, the prisoners were divided into work groups, and all newcomers—Stirner noticed this sometime later—were selected for the heaviest labor, group 4. This seemed to follow a sinister policy designed to weed out the weak through exhaustion and death. Each such Work Kommando was further subdivided into groups under the mandate of a Kapo—the origin of this term always eluded Stirner—who had total control of the fate of the workers under him. At that time, most Kapos were Polish or German Greens, the criminal elements among the prisoners.

Kommando No.4 was composed of more than three hundred inmates, as established by repeated countings. It had to march to a camp gate where the inmates were ordered to remove their caps, were counted once more. Once outside the gate they crossed the path that circumscribed the entire camp, eventually reaching a very large open area on which several building were under construction. Railroad tracks led into the area from somewhere. There were no real walkways or roads; the entire area was one single bog. Kommando No.4 fought its way through this muddy area for half an hour—it was that large—before reaching the other side, always escorted by watchful SS troopers who made an effort to teach the men slogging through the mud a measure of military discipline.

The inmates were ordered to take off their striped jackets and in their underwear had to remove sacks of cement from a long row of railroad freight cars and carry these by hand to a large storage area. Both the Kapos and the SS troopers constantly yelled at them that the entire train had to be unloaded by noon, and the Kapos, with steel truncheons, beat those they deemed not to make a sufficient effort. Stirner had already done similar work in Berlin, and he knew how to pace himself with slower inmates in order to avoid the beatings. His clothing became heavy with the powdered cement, the dust penetrated his skin. In the course of the morning he saw his first dead in Auschwitz: a Dutch Jew who had thrown himself under the wheels of a yard locomotive.

By noon the train had not yet been unloaded. Portable kitchens were driven up and each inmate was issued a bowl of soup, which he ate standing up. Half an hour later back to work. When the train was finally emptied of its cement cargo, the Kapos yelled orders for the in-

mates to push the train from the side track. Three hundred men put their shoulders against the freight cars, but the train would not move. Enraged, the Kapos beat several of the inmates. Only then was it noticed that the train brakes were on. Once released, the inmates moved it as ordered.

That first day—for all those who survived it, and for all following days—the working hours were from 07:00 to 18:00. At that time, all inmates had to get into formations once again right there on the building site and be counted. At the orders from the Kapos they had to sing a German marching song while they marched to the camp gate. There, caps off, they were counted again and once inside the camp, one more time.

After the last count they battled with hundreds of inmates for a turn at the eight water faucets to wash off the cement dust. Upon finally returning to their barracks, all they wanted to do was to fall into their bunks. But they had to search themselves for lice, check off their camp number at some list, and endure an inspection of their miserable bunk first. Each one was issued a quart of soup in a rusty bowl, and beets and sauerkraut. Only then did they fall into their bunks, cement-laden clothes and all.

The following morning, their third in Auschwitz, several of the newcomers keeled over dead during the *Appell* count. From that moment onward, death was a daily occurrence on that cold *Appellplatz.* Stirner had heard of one of the old timers say that an inmate who survives the first month in a KZ could live forever.

On the fourth day Stirner saw an acquaintance, a famous cantor from a Berlin synagogue, die in front of his eyes. The elderly man, unused to heavy manual labor, rapidly exhausted himself, and collapsed during the morning *Appell.* When the SS on duty kicked him with his boot, the man moved but could not get on his feet. He was simply ignored by the SS after that. When the counting was over, Stirner and two friends picked up the cantor and carried him in the direction of the infirmary barracks. He died along the way.

Stirner seemed to endure. His cold even got better. He reasoned that his resistance and stamina were greater than he had thought in Berlin. The early mornings in Auschwitz were icy cold, but the days were sunny, and his friends Kollin and Wertheimer always nearby. On

day eleven, things began to get worse. Ice and snow turned into water, it rained heavily. Everywhere there was deep mud, shoes almost got stuck in it, and his work group still labored outdoors. He was constantly wet, the paper of the cement sacks was moist and burst open, and the Kapos were beside themselves with rage. There was no way to escape it. In the evenings after work, Stirner dragged himself, covered with mud and cement, into his barracks. There was no way to clean up and dry out. He began each new day wet and filthy, ended it the same way, slept that way, and moved through his nightmares the same way.

He contracted an infection on his right foot, so that the daily march to and from the construction site became torture. The morning march was known as suicide time. Any inmate who wanted to put an end to it had merely to break out of the SS-escorted ranks. The guards, who were rewarded for frustrating any efforts at flight with twenty marks and a three day leave, never failed to shoot the inmates at short range. On the march back in the evening, the inmates were too exhausted to have any thoughts about whether they should allow themselves to be shot. They walked in groups of two and three, supported each other, helped weak friends, all the while singing German marches at the insistence of the Kapos. The Jews were ordered to carry their dead back with them, those were laid down at their usual places during the *Appell* and counted for the last time.

It seemed as if every duty-inmate had the right to beat other inmates. The SS in the buildings under construction were particularly vicious, and regularly beat inmates who asked for permission to go to the large hole in the floor that served as a latrine. These watchdog guards always insisted on total subservience, and Jews whom they had to address were expected to remove their caps instantly, and always keep three feet away. I suppose it reinforced their concept of themselves as superior beings, so painstakingly instilled in them. Any sign of laziness or weakness brought the SS into rage, and Stirner saw how several of the weaker inmates died from the beatings right then and there. Stirner began to notice that he was becoming weaker. His constant hunger was torture. Everything on him felt clammy, and it became increasingly more difficult to march with his infected foot. Every time he saw someone die, he asked himself how much longer he could endure.

It was then that he saw an opportunity that made him regain a measure of hope. One day he was at the latrine and in one corner of the slit trench he saw a small piece of newspaper, presumably brought there by an SS trooper to use as toilet paper, and left behind. Looking furtively around, he waited for the SS to look away, picked up the piece of paper, and hid it in his underwear. He brought it back to camp that evening and shortly before "lights out," with his friend Kollin standing guard, he eagerly read the few words on the newsprint. As he pondered and tried to piece together what he had read, it appeared that the Germans had been thrown back at Stalingrad.

He was excited when he crawled into his bunk that evening. He felt that it was not so much the news about the defeat of the Germans that caused new energy to flicker within him, but much more so the miraculous process of life itself. He speculated wildly optimistically about the Russian front operations and thought to himself, I must endure for six more weeks. It was the end of March 1943, so six weeks to the warmth of May would save him.

However, there followed terrible days when Stirner seriously doubted his ability to survive. Together with Kollin and Wertheimer, he was transferred to a work group engaged in heavy digging, under the control of a German Kapo who had received from the SS the special sobriquet "Judenfranz," for he was known as especially vicious with Jewish inmates. He was a Green, for in his Silesian hometown he had been convicted of murder. Now he had been assigned to do some large-scale digging for a foundation. To dig with heavy shovels in the mud was worse than carrying cement sacks and steel blocks. And Judenfranz did not permit his workers to sit during the brief noon break. He forced many of them to come to him and exchange their shoes for worn-out ones taken from the dead, so that he could engage in some profitable shoe trading outside the camp. On one occasion, he ordered his inmates to push little iron railroad cars through the mud instead of on the tracks. He had giant fists, and Stirner saw him beat several weak inmates to death. Stirner felt his strength waning.

On April 2, one of Stirner's friends from the Youth Group in Berlin, a fellow called Schoenfeld, came to see him in a very agitated state. In better days, Schoenfeld, who used to work for the Berlin Jewish Community Organization, was a very sensitive, musically

talented tenor. Now ashen and skinny, he had been in the infirmary for the last four days with pneumonia and was visibly still very ill. He confided in Stirner his decision to commit suicide. As he put it, "I do not want to be trampled to death." It took all of Stirner's energy to talk him out of this endeavor, even though he himself, ever more exhausted, had briefly entertained thoughts about allowing himself to be shot dead during an ostensible attempt at flight. He managed to calm Schoenfeld down.

The next morning, just before the reveille bell rang, shots could be heard. Nothing unusual, as many a night or at early dawn an inmate ran toward the barbed wire so he would be shot. Stirner hardly took notice anymore. It was a rainy, cold morning, and during the usual march to the construction site, Judenfranz was paying particularly nasty attention to an elderly Jew. He drove him to march faster, kicked him. The older man tried to march, but he was weakened; two other inmates supported him while the entire group sang lusty marching songs. Eventually he collapsed. Triumphant yet outwardly enraged, Judenfranz made his column stop. While they stood, an inmate asked Stirner if he had heard the shots in the camp that morning.

"Yes, I did. Something special?"

"Your friend Schoenfeld," said the inmate.

Stirner distinctly felt a terrible fear rising within himself as he realized that his argument the evening before—to give life a chance—had totally failed.

One afternoon, another new transport of Jews arrived at Auschwitz. Of Stirner's 240 fellow arrivees, 150 had survived the first month. Now they were no longer newcomers. Since it was camp policy to subject new arrivals to the worst of the harsh treatment meted out, the brutalities toward Stirner's group diminished slightly. Also, psychologically, newcomers were cathartic to Stirner's group, which began to view itself as experienced inmates, men of steel, who were in a position to help the new, frightened arrivees with good, useful advice.

Stirner began to rebuild his stamina. He had heard that people in KZ's tended to survive if they could get just a minimum of additional daily caloric intake, and that there were ways and means for a body to store inner caloric warmth. Above all, he had learned to be alert, to let

his eyes wander around constantly—to the Kapos, the Supervisor inmates—in order to utilize any and all opportunities to rest. Five seconds rest per minute can mean five minutes rest per hour. He had learned to ask for permission to go to the latrine as often as possible without arousing suspicion, and to stay there as long as possible; also, to ask after several others had already gone there, so he could then wait there in peace for a hole to become available.

Even such a simple process as tearing off a piece of bread at the so-called breakfast was a dangerous waste of energy, and Stirner carefully put a sharp edge on his spoon—his only personal property he always carried with him—by rubbing it against a stone while lying in his bunk at night, so that he could cut his bread crust easily. Prior to this, he had carefully thought about how much energy was required for tearing bread as opposed to that expended in sharpening the spoon and cutting bread instead. Unlike most others, he never ate all of his bread in the morning but saved a piece in his pocket. These saved calories could give new energy in the afternoon.

He observed how infections weakened the resistance of other men, so he put great effort and care into his infected foot and tried his utmost to keep it clean. The bags of cement he had to carry daily were composed of a three-layered paper of which the center layer was relatively clean. He used it as a bandage for his foot, to wrap pieces of saved bread, as toilet paper, and on rainy days, as a washcloth for his face. He increasingly felt how important cleanliness was psychologically, and he devised strategies to fight his way through to the eight water faucets in the washroom. Once a week, when inmates were allowed to let themselves be shaved—by camp inmates, with cold water and dull razors—he never missed the opportunity, no matter how tired he was.

In his work group, he recognized the importance of letting the Kapo, who mistreated them so harshly, do his thing, as open animosity with this hated man resulted in a heavier physical burden for an inmate than the actual workload under his supervision.

Easter of that year, April 25, 1943, was also Stirner's thirtieth birthday. The work groups, as usual every morning, were marched off to work. It was a beautiful day, the heavens were blue, and Stirner was almost breathless as he discerned the distant mountains against the

sky. By contrast, the afternoon was exempt from work, empty, and frightening. He was thirty years of age and felt twice as old. He agonized intensely over his wife and little boy as he hadn't in a long time. He felt very depressed.

One day, the Kapo Judenfranz suddenly ceased beating the men in Stirner's work group. He was his usual self, gruff, bad-tempered, and ugly, but he reined in his murderous fists. That night, all kinds of rumors swirled through the camp, as none of the Kapos anywhere had resorted to brutalities. This had to be a new policy from above. The inmates could only surmise that Germany was so short of labor that even the Jews had a potential value.

However, even this new rule did not suddenly make life any easier. Large numbers of men from the newly arrived transport from Neuendorf became weaker, collapsed, and died, just as had happened earlier within Stirner's group and still did, even if less frequently. The SS, who clearly noticed how the inmates, no longer exposed to their Kapo's physical brutalities, had obviously gained renewed hope, were intent on demonstrating to the inmates that the old rules of cruelty still prevailed. An inmate caught having a pencil was publicly whipped twenty-five times at the morning *Appell* count. Another, who had refused to become a stool pigeon for the camp's political office had his hands tied behind his back and for two hours hung up by the knot that tied the hands together.

At that time a transport arrived with six hundred German convicts from Mauthausen KZ. It appeared as if the Auschwitz Camp Kommandatur felt that the proportion of Jews was getting too large. Because there were not enough Germans and Poles, Jewish inmates were also assigned administrative duties. All Greens from Mauthausen were instantly promoted to Supervisor inmates. As mean as these people were, they were also new arrivees who felt insecure, and Stirner who slowly saw himself as an old-timer, was not in fear of them.

As the summer progressed, human compassion returned to Stirner. He had seen so much misery and human degradation that he had lost, for a time, any feelings of compassion for others, save an animal-like self pity. Suddenly, friendships became important once more. Kollin, calm and with a mind of his own, and Wertheim the idealist had stood by him in the worst of times. Now he began to enlarge his circle.

So it was that one day Stirner got into a conversation with an old Auschwitz camp veteran who had earlier been an inmate at Buchenwald. He asked him for his name: Bernhardt. Then Stirner remembered having met him years ago in a Jewish organization. Bernhardt, who came from Halle, had been a dentist until his detainment by the Gestapo as a political prisoner in 1938. He was a strong man, full of energy, and since his work assignment in the factory was relatively light, he practiced some dentistry on the side, while in his barracks some light duties had been assigned him which provided additional bread rations. Dr. Bernhardt took Stirner somewhat under his wing, invited him frequently to his barracks, and occasionally let him have some of his additional bread rations, which allowed Stirner to build up some of his energy reserves.

Stirner also met an Orthodox Jew from Vienna, who too had been a Buchenwald inmate, and who organized religious services every morning and evening for groups of ten men. Stirner frequently joined them, even though he had never been Orthodox. They met unobtrusively, as if for a little conversation, in one corner of their barracks, and while they feigned a chat, the Viennese whispered prayers which, thanks to the community feeling they propagated, became as nutritionally valuable to the spirit as real calories to the body.

Among the young Zionists from the Neuendorf transport, Stirner found several new friends, a strong sense of community. They influenced many an inmate to consider Palestine their eventual new home, and the very thought of a future home in all that despair brought renewed hope. All inmates felt thoroughly uprooted. Germany was no longer their home.

In their daily marching to the factory and back, the inmates still had to sing German marching songs, but by that summer, Stirner could discern, however lightly, how inmates discreetly hummed certain Jewish melodies in their barracks at night. There was a smoldering song from the Warsaw ghetto, "It is burning." Another said, "Never say that you are walking the last mile."

One evening in early June, after work, Stirner was called to the camp's labor office. A supervisor inmate asked directly: "You are registered as a welder! Are you really a welder?" Stirner did everything in his power to convince the man that he knew that specialty in-

side and out. Finally, the man ordered him to report the next morning to a special metal workers' group. Stirner was very happy that evening. He now somehow became certain he would survive.

At dawn the following day a new chapter opened in his life—even the man doing the *Appell* count and on the march to the factory was different. Stirner's new Kapo was a German with a red patch, a political prisoner from Dresden who, being an anti-Nazi, had his own vision of his functions. While he was not a very pleasant man, he also was no Judenfranz. It turned out that Stirner was not going to work as welder after all, for he was assigned to clean huge metal plates that had been shipped from Leuna, destined to be used in a gasoline distillation tower. He worked all day with a hand file, much less strenuous than his previous assignments. Sometimes, during his labors, he was able to sit on such a sheet, and he could actually feel his health slowly returning. He certainly was not in good condition—both feet were constantly swollen—but he now felt that he was gaining instead of seeing it ebb away.

His transfer did however bring side effects. He had to move to Barracks No.6, away from Kollin and Wertheim, and he worried about them for they were still digging, shoveling, and carrying heavy loads under the watchful eyes of Kapo Judenfranz. Neither of them was registered as professional journeymen, so for them there was no chance of a transfer.

Already before the war, Stirner had had trouble with his teeth, and in his mouth were several gold jackets and a bridge. One morning, biting into his bread, he felt something come loose, and he soon held a gold crown in his hand. He kept it in his pocket. The dentist counseled him to seek out one of the corrupt Supervisor inmates and trade the gold crown for extra rations of bread. He negotiated with the Barracks 6 duty type who issued him three extra loaves of bread for two weeks running. That evening, Stirner ate his fill for the first time since he arrived in Auschwitz.

Each little advantage one managed to glean brought another one in its wake. Every spark of energy Stirner could save during his now lighter work load could be utilized for extra chores that brought additional food rations, contributing to his slowly returning strength. The warm weather added to this process of accumulating energy reserves.

After laboring several weeks in the special metal workers' group, he used some of his evening time to practice the making of the wooden inmate's straw-filled bunks (frequently inspected by the SS for neatness!) and eventually persuaded his block elder to assign him to the barracks' bunk-making team. This meant that he could eat his breakfast in peace in the barracks and stay there until the daily *Appell* count. On rainy mornings this was quite useful. In addition, it brought him an extra food ration.

As his strength slowly returned, his performance in cleaning the heavy metal sheets improved so much that he now received an entry in the camp records for good workers, and one evening he, together with three other inmates, was summoned to the camp's labor office. The labor office manager and a civilian from I.G. Farben questioned the four insistently. Again, his gold-rimmed glasses and his appearance of an intellectual gave cause for doubts about his qualifications as welder. The civilian then asked: "Do you know something about plumbing?" Stirner replied "Yes." If the man had asked him whether he could fly a Messerschmitt fighter plane, he would have answered, "Yes."

"How does one bend a pipe?"

Fortunately, in his Berlin factory job he had seen how pipes were bent. He explained. After more questioning of all four, Stirner and one strongly built young man were selected to help with plumbing work, and the next morning, after the march to the factory with the special metal worker Kommando, they were handed over to a German civilian, who in turn took them to a plumber. This man, a qualified journeyman from Saxonia who liked neither the war nor Hitler, had somehow come to terms with both. Work was his religion. He was a workaholic who did not spare himself and expected likewise from those who worked for him. He treated Stirner and the young man as equals and not as inmates and gave them the feeling that he needed their help. It gave Stirner something he had missed for a long time: a sense of worth.

At first the plumber, declaring his aversion to arguments, did not wish to discuss politics. But eventually Stirner began to explain to him the situation into which the Jews had been forced and attempted to make him understand that his silent tolerance of Hitler was tantamount

to supporting his extermination policy. But the plumber said that he only knew about plumbing. Stirner had never seen such a clever, competent technician, and soon he mastered the role of apprentice in training. As his performance improved, the plumber gave him due respect. The work was indoors so that Stirner was no longer exposed to the elements or the bad temper of a Kapo and thus further improved his strength. The Saxonian started to give him two or three cigarettes each day, which Stirner traded in the barracks for bread. Occasionally, he allowed Stirner to do some welding. But the best part was that his boss shared the daily news with him. The plumber only understood about plumbing work; he could not see the fact that Germany was being defeated in battle day after day. But Stirner clearly saw it, and it was like bread to him.

Late summer, after an argument between I.G. Farben and the Auschwitz camp authorities over whether Stirner's labors, the labors of a prisoner/inmate, were subject to full payment of wages, he was removed from his plumbing job and assigned to a welding Kommando under a Jewish Kapo. Stirner had to relocate to Barracks No.5 where, upon his request, he was also given extra duty to make-up bunks. He now collected extra rations for his welding as well as for his making bunks. In the factory he was under the authority of a Polish civilian called Smuda—one of a number of Poles working for I.G. Farben—who lived in a nearby village. A Polish Nationalist and avid hater of Germans, he was one of the few Poles who got along well with Jews. Smuda could perform superb work, but found great satisfaction in the opposite—sabotage. He worked as little as possible and with great glee as well as competence, he incorporated invisible future metal failures into his seam welding. Stirner became his avid, almost fanatical student.

Soon Smuda brought Stirner daily a few slices of bread and sausage. Better yet, he brought newspapers. Stirner hid these in his underwear and smuggled them into the camp every evening.

His friend Wertheim died in August. This sweet and almost childlike man, always engaged in social work, had once been the director of a Jewish Children's Home in Berlin. He was a lively man, and he also harbored the conviction that man was decent and good. Witnessing so much cruelty and degradation as well as corruption and

meanness even among those being brutalized, and above all the recognition of what Hitler's system really represented,—i.e., that man's idealistic vision of the world and his role in it was a damnable lie—all this broke his heart and will to survive. He willingly contracted lice-transmitted typhus and died.

The inmates began to notice that Auschwitz was being expanded. The barbed wire fences were moved outward. Many new barracks were built. It seemed as if transports from all over Europe would arrive.

One Sunday morning, all welders were summoned to the labor office where a Kapo in charge of plumbing work told them: "Men, we need welders to build a central heating system into the new SS barracks. We will conduct a welding test with each one. Do your best, as this is a splendid opportunity for you."

What he said was quite correct. Those assigned to work inside the camp spared themselves an hour's marching to and from the factory. This was especially desirable for Stirner, whose feet were still swollen. Indeed he was selected, and he now entered a new phase. He no longer needed to march. He was working on plumbing assignments inside the SS buildings. Later, female inmates lived in one of them. The male inmates always called it "the brothel." Stirner's workshop was located in the vicinity of the kitchens. When someone there needed a plumber, he promptly demanded food in payment, and always got it. Stirner was part of a group that did heating and other installation work in a new OR for an infirmary in one of the hospital barracks, and he made new friends among the Jewish doctors. One of them examined Stirner's feet and gave him a pair of good, used shoes for his old ones about to fall apart, and soon enough the open wounds on his feet began to heal.

One evening in the fall of 1943, he heard exciting news from friends returning to camp from the factory. British POW's had arrived in Auschwitz. These were housed in a separate camp, but were supposed to work in the factory. Most of them came from the desert campaign in Libya, places like Tobruk where they were being held until the Allied invasion of North Africa. Then they were moved to a POW camp in Lambsdorff in Silesia. Twelve hundred of them had been brought to Auschwitz to work, clearly in contravention of the Geneva

Convention. These were military men, they had battled Hitler's troops. They were disdainful of Germany and friendly to the Jewish inmates. The fortunes of war had reversed, and the British were quite cocky. When their guards screamed at them, the POW's merely laughed, made obscene gestures, cussed loudly in English. They were deliberately lazy, and generally amused themselves like bad schoolboys. To witness all this was manna from heaven for the Jewish inmates.

Stirner was so excited about everything he heard about the British POWs that he requested a transfer back to Barracks No.5 and the welder's Work Kommando even if that meant marching again. When he finally succeeded and marched to the factory, as so many times before, he saw the Tommies, in army uniform, marching in military fashion, their arms swinging stiffly in the British way, and roaring "Roll out the barrel. . ." Stirner almost broke into tears. After having seen so many starving Jews trying to give their German guards a hard time, however feebly, these men appeared to personify strength and energy, life's force itself, they were not to be cowed. Next morning one of them yelled over to Stirner: "We'll be home by next Christmas." How desperately Stirner yearned for this, even if he had no idea where his future home might be.

It turned colder, and ever-increasing numbers of Jewish transports arrived in long trains. from France, Italy, Belgium, North Africa and Greece. Those who came from warmer climates could not tolerate the damp winter cold and died in droves. Despite it all, Auschwitz was filled beyond capacity, and periodically they were all subject to a medical review. Those found too weak disappeared—presumably into the gas chambers. It was well known by now that the Nazis exterminated the weak and the sick in gas chambers.

Late that fall, Stirner was assigned to a German master journeyman from Breslau, Paul Brandt. On their very first day together, the man said to him: "I am an old Social Democrat. The stripes on your clothes do not concern me. For me you are one of my workers, no more, no less." Brandt was his first superior in Auschwitz with whom Stirner was on a "you" basis rather than "Mister." Brandt hated Hitler. Clearly, he had no objections to Stirner's communing with the British POWs. "Do what you want," he said, "but don't get me in trouble."

One evening, while taking a shower, Stirner talked with the Jewish

inmate supervisor of the huge clothing storage warehouse. The man, called David, asked Stirner for his name. After he heard it he asked if he was related to one Maria Stirner, formerly Herrmann? "Good God!" exclaimed Stirner. "That was my mother."

"Then you are sort of a nephew to me. She was my cousin." David was a supervisor inmate with considerable influence in the camp. He administered the precious hospital linens and sheets. "Listen," he said. "If you need something, come and see me. As far as I know, you are the only relative left to me." When it snowed that winter and the SS walked around in fur coats while the inmates froze and collapsed one after another, thanks to his "uncle" Stirner could wear warm underwear under his striped inmate's uniform.

Christmas 1943 Stirner received a wonderful gift. His block elder invited him to move into the "day room" at the very end of the barracks and promoted him from making up bunks to administrative duties that required no effort at all. He kept the lists on which each inmate, as he filed past his desk on the way to pick up his food, had to check off his number; he assigned bunks and dealt with complaints.

Stirner had become a veteran, an old hand. He was near the pinnacle of the KZ Auschwitz' society, and although this represented for a human being a position of utmost degradation, it hardly mattered. There was worse: Not to exist. To have been exterminated in the gas chamber.

In the early days of 1944 his friend Kollin fell ill with hepatitis and was selected for the gas chambers. At the thought of losing his old friend Stirner was overcome with grief and the guilt of those who survive. By now he knew that Germany was being beaten on all fronts. And if it gets real bad for them, what will they do to us? No doubt we will all wind up where they sent Kollin.

A transport arrived at Auschwitz from Birkenau, and among the arrivees Stirner found a man who had worked in the vicinity of the gas chambers. He asked him: "Whatever happened to the mothers with children?"

"What do you expect?" asked the man.

"We know nothing for certain. Only rumors," said Stirner. "Tell me."

"You ask about your wife and children?"

"Yes. One son."

"How were they handled after the arrival of your train? Were they loaded on trucks with the old and the sick?"

"Yes"

"I am sorry, but I must tell you that there is no reason for you to entertain any hopes at all."

Stirner asked: "Even healthy women?"

The man from Birkenau was annoyed. "I have worked day and night close to the gas chambers. I tell you: there simply are no women and children!"

Three British POW's in Smuda's welding shed, Watson, Deerfield, and Simpkins, had became friends with Stirner. With their Jewish friends they shared their chocolate (Stirner had not seen any for years), and soap from their Red Cross parcels. He told them everything he had seen in KZ Auschwitz. They could barely believe it. "How is it possible," Watson asked, "that normal Germans live outside these KZ where these godawful things happen only a few hundred meters from their homes?" Somehow, the Brits had managed to get their hands on a radio set with which they heard the BBC every day. Stirner translated the German Army communiqués from Smuda's newspaper and they discussed military operations and strategy. All spring long they wondered about the Second Front.

To improve his English, Stirner asked the Brits for any reading material they had to spare. Simpkins produced a printed leaflet from a Protestant Society in Boston. Stirner asked him if he had connections in the U.S.A. Affirmative. Stirner asked him to write to his American friends so that they could contact Stirner's friends in Decatur, Illinois. Immediately they composed a letter. "I am in touch with Stirner. He is in good health. He lost contact with his relatives in Europe. He would be happy to hear from you. . ."

That spring, the KZ inmates were allowed to organize a band under the direction of a Polish Jew who used to play in orchestras aboard the French liner Normandie and other cruise ships. The members used instruments that had been brought to Auschwitz by musician arrivees and were promptly confiscated and stored in one of the camp's warehouses. The band played mornings and evenings as inmates marched out to work and returned. Then, a Pole who had broken out and

was captured had to march round the entire camp carrying a sign that read: "I am glad to be back." The next morning, during *Appell*, he was administered twenty-five lashes while the band had to play German patriotic tunes. From that moment on the band had to play during all public lashings, and their music no longer provided any joy.

Stirner had wagered Dr. Bernhardt two loaves of bread—an incredible stake that could have meant life or death for many an inmate—that the Allies would land in France before April 20. He lost of course. By the end of May, of the 240 men who arrived with Stirner, a mere handful were still alive.

Some of the men, upon arrival at Auschwitz, had managed to smuggle in a few precious stones. The jewels, with the help of middlemen, were traded for a fraction of their real value with the local population outside and saved lives. Stirner did his best to help a wealthy man, Emil Buenos, who, born in Egypt, had been an art dealer in France and tried his utmost to adapt to the camp conditions. Stirner managed to get him transferred out of Kommando 4, which did the heaviest labor, to another one that demanded lighter work, but the man died anyway. Some men simply could not accept the merciless leveling of all inmates to the lowest denominator. The Frenchman Jules Mosse, once a high level member of the French Government, could never grasp that to be a KZ inmate simply meant to be a non-person. He tried desperately to maintain his dignity and pride of position in life. It broke him, and he died.

On June 7, 1944, at 16:00 Stirner was in his welder's shed and looking out the window. He saw a foreman, a young Jew, race toward the shed. Out of breath, the youngster gasped out the words "They have landed! They have landed!"

"Another rumor," said Stirner.

"I'm telling you, it's true. Since yesterday morning."

Stirner ran off to see the British POW's and, himself breathless, asked if they had heard. Watson, Deerfield, and Simpkins professed ignorance and said they would have to wait for the nightly BBC broadcast.

As the various work Kommandos marched back to camp that evening, they had all heard of the report, and in the meantime they believed it. It seemed as if all inmates had gotten drunk. They danced

in the barracks. The older men cried. Everyone looked for his friends and congratulated them. Stirner ran to see Dr. Bernhardt, who had not yet heard the news and reacted sharply with "It's a lie." His hands began to shake, and he said: "If we knew this to be true, and if we knew that our wives and children were alive, we would be like a newborn child. We could start our lives over again."

Back at the factory the following morning, Stirner hurried first thing to Smuda's shed to see his British friends. They were jubilant and raucous, and Stirner knew instantly the news was true. On that afternoon, the German war communiqus announced that the Allied landing forces at Normandy had been thrown back into the sea. The Germans in the camp, who had been quite nervous in the last twenty-four hours appeared to regain their composure. For the inmates, it was days of interminably anxious waiting. Then it became certain that a firm beachhead had been secured, and the inmates knew that it was now a matter of time before they would return to the world.

One could only wait. Caen. Bayeux. Maps. More waiting. June. July. August. Then suddenly Avranches, Paris, the German border itself, the Russians near Kracow.

The atmosphere in the KZ Auschwitz became tense. Decisions were in the air but no one knew what the Germans would do in a last ditch battle. Then the Allies were held up. The Soviet forces stopped at the Vistula, the Americans stalled at Aachen.

Early August the inmates saw their first Flying Fortress bombers in daytime when the Americans bombed an oil refinery at Treblitz, not far from Auschwitz. At the I.G. Farben factory, the German and Polish civilians who worked there had concrete shelters to seek refuge. The inmates had merely open trenches. However, this allowed them to observe the Allied bombers and be jubilant without hindrance. The refinery was hit and for many days the sight of black smoke over Treblitz was a cause of grim pleasure for the inmates.

On August 20, at 11:00 in the morning, Flying Fortresses attacked Auschwitz itself. It was a Sunday, and as the raid began, Stirner, miraculously, was inside the camp, working there. The target was the I.G. Farben plant. The barracks shook. A bomb hit the British POW camp and killed forty men; nearly eighty Jewish inmates were killed inside the plant. The raid took merely a few seconds. The plant, so

painstakingly built, was a picture of devastation: collapsed buildings, railroad tracks torn out of the ground grotesquely pointing skyward, bomb craters everywhere.

From that day onward morale plummeted. For several mornings there sounded air raid alarms and soon there was a second raid. The inmates panicked and ran in all directions. Early September there were several more bombing raids, and the plant was destroyed once again. And again the Germans ordered the camp inmates to clean up and do repair work.

After the German occupation of Hungary, an entire series of train transports with Hungarian Jews arrived at Auschwitz. They were immediately exterminated in the gas chambers. Afterward, the crematoria were so overloaded that many of the corpses were burned in the open fields. The wind blew across the camp. As the stench was carried with it, Stirner deliberately busied himself among the German civilians, conspicuously holding his nose.

One German shook his head and remarked: "It's pretty bad."

Another just shrugged his shoulders and commented: "Such things happen."

One morning in October, Stirner noted that the German civilians had come to work wearing their Emergency Team uniforms. When he asked them why, he was informed that they had been mobilized to assist the SS in the event of inmate riots. Later, Stirner learned of the real reason. A few days before, when a series of transports with Jews from Theresienstadt arrived, the Auschwitz Kommandatur had decided to liquidate the work Kommando operating in the crematoria, and to form a new one instead. Somehow, those inmates, who did the most grisly work of all inmates, got wind of the plan and established contact with another work group inside a munitions plant, obtained some dynamite, pushed their hated green-triangle Kapo into the ovens and blew the entire crematorium sky-high. The Kommando had done a good job. There were no more gassings at Auschwitz.

Winter took hold, and the feelings among the inmates were those of undisguised bitterness. The Allies' thrust forward appeared to have come to a halt, the air raids were fearful, the winter itself unbearable. During the daily count on the windswept *Appellplatz* death was everywhere. The British POW's no longer received their Red Cross

parcels, and the Jewish inmates, who so fondly remembered the generosity of their genial British friends started to share their own meager rations with them.

The birthday of Stirner's wife would have been in December. One day later, a very snowy day, Simpkins took Stirner aside and handed him a wonderful piece of paper. It was a note from his friends in Decatur, Illinois. He rushed to the nearest washroom in the plant, where the attendant was another inmate. "Quick, close the door," Stirner whispered to him, "I must read a letter." He unfolded the page and read these wonderful words: "As soon as the war is over, come and see us. We are still the same friends of old, Alfred, no matter what you have been through."

He was touched and felt his courage and determination reaffirmed.

Right after Christmas there was another heavy air raid and this time the plant was almost totally destroyed. Thereafter, all German efforts to clear the rubble were only halfhearted.

On January 13, 1945, the Soviet armies crossed the Vistula. Two days later there was a long night air raid. The morning dawned ice cold. The guards were tired, the camp administration announced there would be no work that day. The whole day a rumor swirled around that the entire KZ would be evacuated. Five days later, the orders came to prepare for an evacuation. Stirner put on heavy woolen underwear his friends had arranged and packed some bread and margarine he had been hoarding ever since the first rumors had circulated.

There was a last count on the *Appellplatz* and then the inmates of Auschwitz marched west under the watchful eyes of the entire SS guard company. The temperature was well below zero, Fahrenheit. The march lasted thirty-six hours. Anyone who lagged was shot on the spot. Throughout the entire time the SS were ever fearful of being cut off by the Soviets. Those who made it reached Gleiwitz, where they were all hustled into a freight train. When Stirner's train left Berlin for Auschwitz years earlier, there were sixty people assigned to a car. Now it was almost two hundred. The entire train carried 5,500 people.

The train's first destination was KZ Mauthausen in Austria, where the camp authorities refused to take in the Auschwitz evacuees, since Mauthausen was already overcrowded. The train proceeded slowly to Berlin. They were locked into their cattle cars for seven days and

nights. Those who survived, lived on snow. More than a thousand died en route. Many jumped out of the moving cars. Stirner's Czech friend Edouard Kohn jumped off and ran away, while Stirner thought time and again about how he had not survived all that horror to die now on the way to freedom. Finally the survivors were brought into an aircraft plant in Berlin where they were issued their first "meal," bread and soup. For a week they slept on the cement floor, after which they were transferred to wooden barracks and had to work in the plant. They worked there for three months during which they endured countless air raids.

By April 21, the Soviet advance had reached the outskirts of Berlin, so the authorities once more decided to march the Auschwitz inmates further west. Day and night they marched through the province of Mecklenburg. Somewhere near Schwerin in early May, Stirner and several friends evaluated rumors that they were on a strip wedged between Soviet and American troops, and decided to chance a breakout. They slipped off into the night, and despite some challenge once, they got away.

On May 3, 1945, Stirner and six companions stepped out of some woods into a clearing where, in the distance, an American flag was draped over a bush. For several minutes the seven men stood at the edge of the clearing, their eyes full of tears. When Stirner felt he was again able to speak, he stepped forward and approached an officer. "We are political prisoners who escaped," he declared. "We are Jews." For the longest time in Stirner's ears rang the first word the American had said: "You're welcome here," The officer turned to a private near him and said: "Break out some C-Rations for these people."

Later that day, in the continuous comings and goings Stirner noticed a young American soldier get out of a jeep. It looked to him that he could be Jewish. He asked him. The soldier turned to the inquisitive stranger. "Who wants to know?" Stirner said that he himself was Jewish, and with deep emotion acknowledged that he wanted to shake hands with a Jew who had borne arms against Hitler and that this would give him a sense of returning, at last, to a sane world. The young American soldier, overcome with his own understanding of the moment, embraced Alfred Stirner warmly while several times repeating "Sholom aleichem,"—Peace be with you.

CHAPTER 18

World War II Ends Altogether

Back to Peace, Growing Up and Making Career Choices,
Not Always Happy Ones.

Before the V-E (Victory in Europe) day celebrations all over the free world even got into high gear, the Allied military establishment was turning its attention to Japan. A huge task still lay ahead: to win the war in the Pacific.

Terrible, bloody fighting had characterized the Pacific war all along, as the Americans took island after island from the Japanese in savage battles. Naval and air engagements had cost thousands of lives. The desperate, stubborn Japanese, as a last resort, turned to "Kamikaze" (Divine Wind) suicide attacks upon the U.S. Navy and exacted a heavy toll. Ever closer to Japan moved the American forces: Saipan. . . Tinian. . . Iwo Jima. . . Okinawa. . . Now the home islands of the enemy were well within reach of that new long range bomber, the B-29 Superfortress, flying from bases in the Marianas. The U.S. air raids, while devastating Japan's urban centers of predominantly wood construction, nevertheless left the Allied command no choice but to contemplate that long-dreaded option of an invasion of Japan. The losses anticipated were staggering: Later one learns that a million Allied casualties were expected.

At the urging, years earlier, of Albert Einstein and a handful of U.S. and emigré physicists, FDR was made aware that Hitler Germany's Max Plank Institute had been working on the discovery of nuclear fission for some time already. Certain that, if successful, Hitler would not hesitate to use it, America marshalled its brain trust and resources and to the total surprise of the world, under cover of Project Manhattan, had secretly developed a super weapon at Los Alamos, New Mexico. Now, faced with the potential loss of lives in such an imminent invasion of Japan, President Truman, in August 1945, or-

dered the first atomic bomb to be dropped. On August 6, the Superfortress *Enola Gay* climbed into the morning air over Tinian and wheeled west. Hiroshima was the target.

As the *Enola Gay* released its deadly cargo, before the astounded eyes of a watching world a mushroom cloud—seen only once before during the first atomic test ever, called "Trinity," by the handful of scientists at Alamogordo, New Mexico—rose over the city. Total devastation. An estimated 80,000 casualties in one second!

The nuclear age had dawned. A second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 8, and Japan surrendered unconditionally. General Douglas MacArthur, aboard the U.S. battleship Missouri anchored in Tokyo Bay, accepted the Japanese capitulation before an impressive assembly of Allied Forces' representatives. In a starkly simple ceremony, one after another, Allied generals and admirals affixed signatures to the surrender document. For the last time, household names like Nimitz of the Navy, Wainwright of Corregidor, Percy of Singapore, and others quietly stepped forward to sign. When it was all over, MacArthur announced simply, "These proceedings are closed," and walked away.

The Second World War had finally ended.

For us, among the first targets of the Nazi regime, so fortunate that we escaped it in time, there was also the grim realization that millions of others, just like us, had not. Eventually, the world came to know that all that terrifying film footage, taken for the first time at the liberation of the many Nazi concentration camps by Allied troops, gave a hint of how it had cost the Jewish people 6 million dead. As more and more factual details emerged in the course of time, they spoke of a horror that is difficult to put into words. How does one deal with such a number? The enormity of it is such that it becomes abstract. Man can mourn the loss of a child, a mother, a father, a sister, a brother, and comprehend it. But how does one comprehend 6 million children, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers. The population of an entire small country. Ordinary and very diverse people like your neighbors, like the people who run your grocery store, your bakery, your gas station at the corner. For no reason other than they were born into a different culture. Given the talents and the relentless quest for a good

education that has always been a integral hallmark of Jewish life, one might speculate as to how many potential scientists, physicians, engineers, writers, and composers, how many Nobel prize winners and their contributions were lost to this world in the winds carrying their ashes out of the belching chimneys. I dared not think too often about it all. And at the time it was all over, the full impact did not come. Perhaps mercifully so. It would take years for the full implications to sink in.

Yet the world was barely coming to terms with its wounds sustained in that long struggle, when it was already clear that another major confrontation was gathering its black clouds. On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill, in a now famous speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, proclaimed "An Iron Curtain has descended across Europe." The Cold War was on.

The two superpowers to emerge from the war were infinitely more powerful than any country ever was before. The highly technological weaponry of destruction at the disposal of one, soon to be achieved by the other, created the aura of nuclear confrontation that, if unleashed, could possibly have meant the destruction of the planet. Man had learned very little. It became an uneasy impasse, held in check by "mutual assured destruction" under the appropriate acronym MAD! The confrontation lasted from 1945 to 1989. Forty-four years of implied "brinkmanship," as the world teetered, and on one occasion came awfully close to its own destruction.

In the Brazil of 1945, there were stirrings of the postwar economic revival. There was much visible progress, many American companies established new operations, brought new products, much appreciated, into a Third World country. It was to be short-lived. The government of Pres. Getulio Vargas, ruling by decree, commenced a policy of strangling intervention in the economy through nationalistic legislation. Very soon, we saw escalating import restrictions. The reason was the avowed conservation of hard currency, once earned liberally during wartime, now reserved for "essential imports vital to the country's industrial development," the goal of the administration. From then on, for four decades of successive governments, it was to be the hallmark of Brazil's roller coaster economic climate, forever

subject to politics, ultra-nationalism, and official, heavy-handed intervention.

Despite the restrictions, there flourished a huge black market, especially in imported automobiles, for which the country was starved during the war. But, as anywhere else in Latin America, there were enormous inequities in favor of the privileged few. Politicians and the military were given unrestricted privileges to import anything, while legitimate development requiring imported goods and raw materials slowly stagnated. With a jingoistic campaign and at enormous public expense, Brazil finally developed its own steel industry at Volta Redonda near Rio de Janeiro, to the total exclusion of imported steel well before the new plant had the capacity to satisfy a burgeoning demand.

Throughout Latin America, the governments, then as always, favor their own: the establishment, the military. When one is wealthy in Latin America, one is very much so. The privileged minority live sumptuously. The vast majority very poorly, without any improvement in sight, its numbers growing exponentially. A strictly Catholic region where the church plays a dominant role in public and political life, the population growth is unchecked, so much so that no matter what the nation's gain in GNP, it can never catch up. There are similes elsewhere, e.g., the Philippines, India [not Catholic, but religious nevertheless] to name just two. China was traveling that road until recently, when its government, by fiat, limited the number of offspring per family. Harsh, but with a billion population and growing, the Chinese government saw it as the only way.

Dormant jingoistic tendencies occasionally rose to the surface. Nationalism is a widespread disease of the underdeveloped, the have nots, and it is easily incited by the unscrupulous, the opportunistic. Foreign holdings, particularly American, became the object of repeated vilification in the media, which must have obtained its cue from somewhere. Shortly after the war, the most visible, Coca Cola and Esso (today Exxon) were most frequently singled out as targets.

Soon enough, another new powerful image was projected. The country was spending large sums of hard currency for imported oil and fuel. Yet, there were suspected reserves of petroleum. Only where? And how large? The international petroleum giants were

brought in to find it. When they did, a new government oil agency, Petrobras, run by generals and colonels due to retire, was proudly created to exploit Brazil's mostly offshore reserves. It became vital to examine financial and technical partnerships with the big oil firms. Brazil, like most countries in the same position, simply did not have the wherewithal to do it on its own. But nationalism prevailed. The slogan "O petróleo é nosso" (The oil is ours); became a battle cry of massed demonstrations, the topic was hotly debated everywhere. Ultimately, the sloganeering won out. Foreign arrangements were cancelled. Petrobras was going to take the task upon itself. It took two costly decades for Brazil to bring in its first offshore drilling rig on the northeast—and not without the know-how of foreign experts, contracted on the sly. It was one of the projects on which the government (and the nation) almost went bankrupt. And of course, the anticipated reserves, exaggerated shamelessly during the long debate, proved an illusion.

The power of the privileged few was then very much in evidence, although, fortunately today, no longer quite so glaring. If one was unfortunate enough to get involved in even a minor collision or scrape with another vehicle in Brazil's always chaotic traffic, there was a good chance that the man emerging from the other car, regardless of fault, would come at you like a fury, wildly waving his index finger in your face and screaming, "Do you know who you are talking to," while whipping out his military ID card. That meant only one thing—get away quickly. If you were dumb enough to hang around, you would soon face a detachment of MPs who, on his say-so, would take you away, throw you into a nearby military prison, incommunicado, and you might not be heard from for quite some time. Civilians did not count for much in the 1940s and 1950s.

My employer, Tecnica Serva-Ribeiro, a respected engineering firm, once one of the country's most successful, fell on hard times because of import restrictions. The country went without vital imports (although thousands of shiny new American cars, most with official license plates, were in evidence); its vital infrastructure suffered. The organization was forced to contract drastically, eventually closed. Time for me to move on.

But where to? I had to look for an American company that was not entirely dependent on imports. After careful selection of possible employers, I landed with Studebaker, which had just established a São Paulo truck assembly plant run by a former Danish national, an ex-Ford executive. The small but efficient operation assembled trucks from imported components, although in small measure some locally manufactured items, as available, were incorporated. That, and the fact that it gave employment to a local labor force, granted it preferential treatment, and Studebaker was going great guns. After a hard training and thanks to my bilingual capacity to deal with the original technical manuals, I was assigned, among others, to supervise the dealer service organizations throughout the country.

Studebaker's first post-war cars, the racy Champion and the pricier Commander, were futuristic Raymond Loewy designs that became instant hits everywhere. But there were some serious technical problems. We were having great difficulties in trying to fix a wobbly front end and steering assembly in the Commander. Soon enough Studebaker's South Bend plant advised that there was an inherent design flaw, but they had found a way to correct it, and would send us a technical representative to teach us. One very personable ex-Marine arrived, speaking only English, naturally. By default, I was made his liaison and was ordered to mother him.

A crackerjack engineer, George became my man to work with, eat with, sleep with. He showed us the necessary modifications, which were essentially quite simple, and we now had to pass them on to our besieged dealer network. We undertook several lengthy, arduous car trips together into the interior of Brazil, to the primitive backwater towns, and held service seminars. George commenced in English, I translated into Portuguese. Soon enough we had it down pat and moved along very quickly. George was a challenge to work with. He was competent, witty, caustic, cynical. And a hard drinker. And did he like the girls! Almost wherever we went, he spent the nights not in our hotel, but in some cathouse. It was incumbent upon me to pick him up in the early mornings. He would shake himself, have some black coffee and a cigarette, and we were ready to move on. Night after night.

He certainly was a remarkable type, and I liked him immensely. We solved the Studebaker problem after six weeks of intensive work,

upon which George returned to South Bend, Indiana. I returned to my routine and sorely missed the excitement he had brought into my life.

Despite Studebaker's privileged position, the heavy hand of the government economists could be felt here too, as at the GM and Ford plants. The import of engines, chassis, axles were all curtailed drastically, strangling further operations. Very soon, Studebaker closed its Brazilian plant, and I was jobless once more. This time I was going to find myself a company that imported nothing. It had to work with locally available raw materials, or else I could expect the same repeatedly. This was not easy and took quite some time.

Robbie's long-term liaison with Clara unfortunately came to an end. He was deeply unhappy and so was she. It was her father's doing, and one could only hint at his motivation. Like many autocratic parents, he was undoubtedly hoping for someone financially more secure than Robbie was at that time. We all tried to cheer Robbie up. I spent all of my free time with him, going out, sailing, doing things, going places. Our relationship was already close, created during our childhood, the back-to-back street brawls in Nazi times, being together in school in Italy and later Switzerland. Now it became even stronger.

One evening, we got ourselves tickets to the latest sensation in São Paulo, an American ice show, *Holiday on Ice*, at the Pacaembu Sports Arena. Everyone was enthralled. During the intermission, many in the audience went to the edge of the ice rink to touch it. Was it really ice? They had never seen ice in any other form but cubes in a gin and tonic. The girls were knockouts, and we didn't waste time. After the show Robbie and I took out two of them. I found myself there on several subsequent evenings for this purpose, when I accidentally met the owner of the show, who had somehow noticed me. He engaged me in conversation and invited me to dinner after showtime. He intrigued me. Morris Chalfen from Minneapolis was a most amusingly peculiar character. Expensively dressed but rough hewn, he seemed to jump right out of the pages of Damon Runyon. Our dinner, incidentally, was not alone. Chalfen brought along several of his female stars who delighted in his free spending ways.

Suddenly, Chalfen let the shoe drop. He wanted me to work for his ice show. They needed my language abilities to cue the many earphone wearing spotlight operators in the arena through a one-way in-

tercom during the performance. It was done presently by an American who spoke some Spanish, which had caused some missed lighting cues that were embarrassing. Would I please do it? Someone would coach me. I did not have a job at that time, the work was nights only except for matinees and weekends, and he offered me a generous $150 a week, which I could use very well. As a matter of fact, it was a small fortune in Brazilian currency. And all those girls.

I accepted his proposition. The next eight weeks found me working at *Holiday on Ice* every night, and I was frequently out with some girl or Chalfen himself for late dinner afterward. It was great fun, I did my job precisely as coached, and they were very pleased. But it certainly raised hell with my sleep habits. My brothers were very curious and teased me to no end, my Papi had some mixed feelings but was generally amused, knowing it would be temporary only. Mother in turn was alarmed at the doings of her youngest who, she tirelessly reminded me, should rather have a "regular job" like everyone else. But they came to see the show and indeed had a wonderful time. Papi, with a gleam in his eye, wanted to know precisely which of the girls I was going out with.

Morris Chalfen and I became very friendly. By the time the show was to close in São Paulo he wanted me to come along to Rio de Janeiro to do the very same. I was tempted to accept, as my weekly pay was now to be $250, and I still had not found a suitable company in São Paulo to pursue for a "regular" job.

We spent two months having a highly successful run in Rio de Janeiro, and I now worked full-time not only on my normal lighting duties but as all-around interpreter in a number of situations that such a big operation requires. Voluntarily, Chalfen gave me another raise. He insisted on my company, and was aghast when I asserted my intention that at least some evenings I would foot the bill for our dinners. He was obviously not used to that, had endless amounts of money available, bought himself people and company whenever he wanted them, and there were obviously enough people only too willing to play that game. He had never heard anyone tell him that he was uncomfortable with him paying the bills all the time. I may very well have been his first experience, and I wonder if he ever really understood. He just found it amusing. Of course, we continued on friendly terms, but on

my terms—at least part of the time, since I really could not always compete with his deep pockets.

Toward the middle of our Rio engagement, a rather large problem surfaced. Greg Fisher, the chief electrician and my direct boss, had taken to drinking heavily in the quiet afternoons and had begun to miss evening performances altogether. His very nice wife, who was also the show's wardrobe mistress, was desperate but powerless to stop him. I was able to manage the electric switching for all arena, skating rink, and footlight cues without Greg, plus my own searchlight cues, but I was a little frantic and unprepared for this large responsibility all on my own. I wished desperately that he were there. Greg failed to come to work on one, two, three evenings in a row. He simply disappeared and even his wife had no clue as to his whereabouts. Chalfen and other staff members were equally frantic. No one else really knew all of Greg's job. I was the only who had worked with him, watched him, and I managed somehow, though not perfectly, I thought. When Greg eventually showed up again drunk, Chalfen, I was later told, took him to task. There were words, as well there might have been, and Morris Chalfen, very angry, fired him on the spot. Thoroughly drunk, he was put on a Pan American plane the next day. Within the hour Chalfen and I sat in his hotel room, and he announced that henceforth I was the show's electrical engineer in charge. Not only to run it, but to take it down in Rio, pack it up, and reinstall it in Buenos Aires a few weeks from now. I was aghast, utterly unprepared for this major responsibility and unwilling to take it on. He convinced me that I simply had to do it, there was no one else and no way of getting a replacement from the States in the limited time available. He had, he said, more confidence in me than I had myself. And he would see to it that I got all the help I needed. There was little choice but to accept or quit. Gritting my teeth, I took the challenge, subject to a small problem. To travel, leave Brazil, I needed a valid passport.

And I had none. Not yet a Brazilian citizen, which would not happen before 1949 at the earliest, after ten years of required residence before the citizenship application could even be filed. And as to the passport with which I had come into the country when I was a child, I was part and parcel of Mother's passport, and this was no longer acceptable. I knew of the whereabouts of the Costa Rican consulate, I

had seen its brass plaque on a building in Copacabana. How often had I played with the preposterous idea of going up there to request a passport of my own. The risk of doing so was great, not just to me but to my family as well, all living as Costa Rican citizens as we had arrived in 1939, and it was unmistakably so recorded on our priceless ID cards and records. If the consul wanted to be difficult, he could. This could raise hell within the Brazilian bureaucracy. Our carefully constructed lives in Brazil were going well, but no one could travel yet.

I agonized, and decided to visit the consulate. The consul was an extremely polite and pleasant man, and three days later I held a brand new, legitimate Costa Rican passport of my very own in my hands and could not believe it. That night I called Papi at home in São Paulo, asked him to sit down first, and told him. He was incredulous. I made an appointment for Papi and Mutti at the consulate, and a week later they flew in and stayed at my hotel, and they too were holding brand new real passports in their hands. Father just shook his head in disbelief. Now I accepted Chalfen's proposal.

The next several days and nights were very busy. I drew careful diagrams of all the electrical wiring, attaching numbered tags to each of hundreds of electrical cables at both ends, all in accordance with a chart I had worked out, and all matched to their respective sockets, equally marked. After the closing of the show in Rio, several of the male skaters were assigned to help, and we carefully packed and labeled our crates. When all was done and carted away to the airport, I had fear in the pit of my stomach that I had overlooked something vital that I might never be able to untangle again.

My early enthusiasm for the showgirls had cooled considerably. Most were quite shallow. One could call them little gold-diggers or "bimbos" as my friend Carl Martin maintained, who looked far better from a distance with their pancake makeup on than from up close. Halfway intelligent conversation was just not in the cards. Instead, I struck up a solid, mutually supportive friendship with Carl Martin "the trumpet" from Chicago and a splendid young couple from New York, Marion and Sylvia Aldridge, the vocalists in the band, two very well trained voices. They were to pursue their careers by becoming stars with the Aachen Opera Company in Germany much later. Our arrival in Buenos Aires was greeted by my Uncle Sigi who, with his inim-

itable know-it-all air good-naturedly deplored his nephew's association with anything so low-life as an ice show. Never mind, he was very helpful in the weeks to come, and I rediscovered the uncle I had not seen since my childhood.

Surveying Luna Park, our show venue, brought a real shock. The show's advance team had somehow failed to discover the rather crucial fact that the power supply at this huge building was 220 volts. All the show's electrical equipment, switching and power panels, fuses, searchlights, intercoms, light bulbs, most of them 1000 watts each, for the show's lighting were all for 110 volt current only. I almost had apoplexy. What now? Three days to show opening! Luna Park's veteran chief electrician came to the rescue. I was thankful for being able to speak Portuguese and Spanish. He explained, and I understood. We wired the show's entire system in series. A brilliant solution to what otherwise would have been a disaster. The only inconvenience was that every time a bulb blew, and that was often, two of them would blow out at once. An urgent request was wired to New York for more spares, and they were air freighted in. We were home.

The reception to the ice show, as in Brazil, was overwhelming. A packed house almost night after night. Even for Buenos Aires, a very worldly city, it was a novelty. Chalfen was so tickled that my new friend, the electrician and I had saved his day, that the electrician got a well deserved large bonus and I another raise. I was now making big money for someone so young. My musician friends and I had a wonderful time in Buenos Aires. My Uncle Sigi had obtained for us a short-term lease on a rental apartment on Calle Florida right downtown, instead of living in hotels we were all very tired of. And cheaper too. Uncle Sigi's wife had just given birth to a baby boy, Roberto, and they were very happy. I got to know him better after all those years, just when he was beginning to be successful with his children's book publishing business, later to mushroom into a prominent Spanish language world book empire, today run superbly by the very same Roberto.

On the closing night of the show, some of the skaters prevailed upon me to participate in a comedy number on the ice. I could not skate then and still can't. It was hilarious. My not very successful antics of desperately trying to stay up on my borrowed skates blended in

with the comedy, and our public in Buenos Aires never knew. A few days later it was all over. The entire company flew back home to the United States.

I was not far behind. My newly found freedom, my passport, was stamped with a U.S. visa, my very first, from the American consulate in Buenos Aires. I was finally going to see the U.S.A., visit Carl in Chicago, the Aldridges in New York and my uncles Benny and Little Max I had not seen since the 1930s. Besides, Chalfen had mumbled about taking me to Europe on the following tour of *Holiday on Ice* with a brand new show. While it wasn't exactly my ambition to be associated with a show for that long, what couldn't I do with that kind of money! It was certainly attractive—not to speak of seeing Europe after the war. When I returned home, Mutti was of course very upset about my leaving, and to America to boot. She knew only too well of my admiration of things American. Fearful, she wondered if I would ever come back. Maybe my Papi knew me better; he did not object too much and quickly let me be in my enthusiasm. Taking advantage of a momentary loophole in the Brazilian customs regulations, he and I agreed that I would buy a good used car for the family in the United States and bring it back. A few days later, after telephoning my friends in New York about my arrival in LaGuardia, I was off on a Pan American clipper. A dream come true.

My arrival there was a cold shower. A somewhat sadistic immigration officer, after I had presented my passport to him, kept pushing me back to the end of the line. He took me last. And gave me a very bad time. He fingered my passport endlessly. In his provincial, microscopic mentality it was inconceivable that a German-born person, residing in Brazil, traveling on a Costa Rican passport with a U.S. visa issued in Buenos Aires could be legitimate. It may have been unusual, I admit, but it was all perfectly legal, and nothing more than a sign of the upheaval caused by those years. It was obviously too much for him. He battered me with questions over and over again as if I were a criminal, as he surely suspected me of something vile. Time dragged on, my friends were outside anxiously waiting for me. He would not let me go. I saw him pick up a pad of forms and start writing. Sitting in front of his desk facing him I read upside down the words "Ellis Is-

land." That same moment he mumbled sarcastically, "We'll take care of your expenses for a few days." Now I got livid and let him know it in no uncertain terms. I knew all about Ellis Island. Once there, one did not get off it so easily. And why, after all? It was, I felt, terribly arbitrary on his part. My heretofore politely restrained, respectful behavior went out the window. It threw him off, and the hell I raised, loudly reverberating through the now almost empty arrival hall attracted a fellow immigration officer, who, long finished with his passengers, ambled over curiously. After examining my passport carefully, the newly arrived officer asked him what the problem was? Everything seemed in perfect order. Why don't you let the kid go? That did it. He shrugged his shoulders in resignation and put the pad away. A few minutes later, greatly relieved, I was greeting Sylvia and Marion waiting patiently outside. I was now in America.

But this nasty episode never left me. My first person-to-person experience five minutes after joyfully setting foot on my beloved America was a nightmare. I wanted to embrace it, breathe it in. It was to be prophetic. I just did not see it then for what it represented.

Marion and Sylvia took me to their apartment on upper Broadway where I was their guest. I soon wanted to forget the bad encounter. I was thrilled with everything. They had tickets for us to *South Pacific.* They showed me much of New York. I learned all about hamburgers, Howard Johnson ice cream, Walgreen's Drugstores, Radio City Music Hall and Rockettes, Rockefeller Center, Carnegie Hall, corned beef and pastrami sandwiches at the Stage Deli, the Empire State Building. Everything was new, was bigger than life, as if taken straight out of the many Hollywood films I had seen.

The next day I had a happy reunion with my uncles, Little Max and Benny, and their wives, who lived only a few blocks away. We were to see each other frequently. Soon enough I paid a visit to Washington, D.C., and got a firsthand view of all that I had seen in the pages of *LIFE* magazine in the preceding years. Naturally I also visited my cousin Norbert, then studying at the School of Foreign Service, hoping for a career in the diplomatic service. After I arrived at their apartment in Alexandria, Norbert told me that a professor of his from Georgetown University was dropping in that evening for some coffee and a

chat. Why should I mind? Everything was so exciting. After a dinner full of nonstop conversation, he arrived. A South American, his accent was unmistakable. He eyed me narrowly and asked Norbert who that might be. Norbert introduced me as his cousin who had always wanted to come to America, admired it greatly and had just finally made it. The man, very serious, suddenly looked at me with knitted brow, made a sweeping gesture with his arm knifing through the air, and growled in his heavy Spanish accent, "Americaanos, they're aaallll gangsters. . ." I did not know then what to think, other than that he was a little crazy. The years have taught me otherwise. Another unforgettable moment.

So much so, that when I finally came to live in America sometime later, to start a whole new life and career, it took several years for his words to sink in. And tragically make sense. Not that the Professor's Americanos, and I became one of them, are gangsters in the Hollywood sense of the word. Indeed not.

My years of undisguised admiration for America, especially for its miraculous transformation of spirit following December 7, 1941 when the nation, gallantly rising to the challenge as if one, had, to borrow from Winston Churchill, its finest hour. But after the war was won, and well deserved post war prosperity spread across the country, it also brought with it something else, something ominous that took years to develop.

I found an aristocracy of the simple minded, the uneducated. Under the benevolent mantle of democracy one had fought so hard to preserve, everyone was considered equal, and those who belonged to an intellectual elite, as they exist everywhere, were met with derision, so much so that the term Egghead, especially coined for the very bright, actually became a pejorative. Add to that the frustrations of the cold war confrontation, which marred the enjoyment of peace and gave vent to the full display of America's paranoia with Communism. Expressed in the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, and later the sorry spectacle of the MacCarthy era, it gave full rein to the powerful mediocre, the mean, the vicious lies, character assassination, the ruination of many valuable careers and productive lives.

As time went on, I found that America was living in the high tide of the mediocre, the greatest era of the goof-off, the age of the job half done. The land from coast to coast was enjoying a stampede away from responsibility. It is populated with laundry men who won't iron shirts, with waiters who won't serve, with carpenters and plumbers who will come around someday maybe, with executives whose minds are either on the quick profit, the golf course or their golden parachutes, with teachers who demand a single salary schedule so that achievement cannot be rewarded, nor poor work punished, with students who take cinch courses because the hard ones make them think, with spiritual delinquents of all kinds who have been triumphantly determined to enjoy what was known as the new leisure.

There was a never ending parade of quick-buck artist, a readiness to cheat, to exploit shamelessly, an unvarnished greed, where the overriding preoccupation with making money sweeps aside ethics, morality, legality and just plain decency. Painfully, I found this to pervade all levels, in the corporate world, in government, on the political scene, and in everyday business. An atmosphere where what is said does not square with what is done. Where fraud, just barely within narrow confines of legality, is commonplace on the part of respected institutions. And considerably more widespread, outside of legal bounds, by anyone who can think of a gimmick to fleece the next fellow. Entire fields of business endeavor, especially in the service and repair industry, enjoy a most questionable reputation for gross incompetence while gouging the public. America has a technically superb health care system that is deservedly the envy of the world, but refuses to deal with its own problems—an enormously overburdened, expensive bureaucracy of medical, hospital and insurance conglomerates predominantly geared to profit while often calling itself non-profit—long on paperwork and short on patient care. There is a national preoccupation with that which is trivial, while crucial issues are swept under the rug. Where the public education system, long the target of severe criticism by a well educated minority, has been allowed to fester in mediocrity, producing an ever increasing, economically unviable level of the population that can often barely read or write nor express itself, let alone perform tasks except of the most unskilled kind.

Where hard nosed legions of lawyers, always available for a price, can and will twist the truth as it suits them or their clients, be these prestigious Wall Street brokerage firms or common street gang members just back from a killing rampage through their neighborhood. And all this with an air of nonchalance.

Yet, most everyone is polite, well mannered, and totally convinced they are doing the "right thing." In the last decade, all this has been compounded by political correctness and the imperative to feel good about oneself, a victory of style over substance. All the while, drugs, crime, guns and unmitigated violence rule the cities. America has slowly become a nation of people who only have rights but no responsibilities.

Clearly, such behavior, to one degree or another, is evident in other parts of the world as well. But it is in America where the nation has a self perception of itself as a moral, God-fearing country of the highest ethical standards, that is at such gross variance from its history, and especially the present. It is a myth far from reality. And the subject of another book.

A few weeks later I was in Chicago and Carl awaited me. He was a very amusing, fun-loving young man. We had a wonderful time together. He reciprocated my South American tour guide services a few months back, and showed me Chicago inside out. I loved it. Mindful of Papi, I investigated a number of car dealers and eventually bought a splendid light-green Mercury four-door sedan for shipment to Brazil. It was a used vehicle but in excellent shape. Car dealers were different then. Eventually I drove it back east to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I audited an MBA course at the Harvard School of Business Administration for some time. It opened my eyes to the possibilities of entrepreneurship. From there to New York, where the car was shipped to Santos.

Forever alert and pondering my future while admiring the kaleidoscope of the American scene and marketplace, I kept an eye peeled for business possibilities that one might take back to Brazil. Aware of Coca Cola's success, I paid a visit to the 7-Up Corporation in downtown Manhattan near Wall Street. Who knows, maybe I could put together a bottling franchise. There were several people in São

Paulo I could think of who might be willing investors. To my enormous surprise, the overseas manager of 7-Up was quite amenable to my inquiry. Yes, they would be pleased to pursue it further, and provided me with full background and financial requirements of a bottling franchise. But a São Paulo franchise had already been granted that was presently gearing up for modest production. Yet Rio de Janeiro was free and available. However, there was one fly in the ointment. The São Paulo franchisee also had been granted an option for Rio. He thought they would not be able to exercise it for years to come, busy and financially stretched as they were, launching the São Paulo operation. 7-Up was anxious to penetrate this profitable market, and they would be glad to see me put it together, provided I was able to get the São Paulo group to relinquish its Rio option. I should see what I could do.

The Mercury arrived a few weeks after I got back myself, and we all went down to Santos to get it out of customs. Papi's eyes gleamed with pride and satisfaction as he settled into the comfortable, deep-cushioned leather seats—all his, handpicked by his son in the U.S.A. for his family, from his own money hard-earned in Brazil. I think he felt he had finally arrived.

Father, the boys, and I discussed the 7-Up proposition and analyzed it. All three were unanimously interested in pursuing it with me, and while feelers were put out to put together a financially strong group, I proceeded to arrange a meeting with the São Paulo bottling franchise. There followed a series of meetings with this group. It was composed of a young Brazilian, scion of a wealthy family, who was in partnership with a young American. While the Brazilian partner did not take long to become convinced that starting a bottling operation in Rio would be most productive and synergistic to their own efforts, the American partner shot down the proposal almost instantly, unwilling to relinquish the Rio de Janeiro option despite the stark fact that it would be years before they could ever undertake it themselves. Instead of thinking like a businessman, he acted like a soldier of fortune, counting his chickens before they were hatched, despite his Brazilian partner's counsel to the contrary. The project regrettably shattered on his arrogance, despite the fact that we had, in the intervening weeks, put together a strong financial group eager to back the Rio venture,

and held out a possible participation as inducement. Their São Paulo operation, which we now watched with special interest, was much delayed coming on line. When 7-Up hit the soft drink scene it was successful, thus vindicating our own projections. But somehow it never became a force for other soft-drink firms to worry about. It wouldn't take off as everyone had anticipated. Eventually, through the 7-Up New York office I kept in touch with, I learned that the two partners had had a falling out over management, that the American partner had overnight left the partnership, not without absconding with corporate funds. It took at least another ten years for 7-Up to make it to Rio de Janeiro. By then Coke, ever market-wise, was so entrenched it was a tough uphill battle.

It was now time to pick up where I had left off before becoming involved with the ice show. Swift, the meat packer, became my target. They were totally independent of imports, all their basic raw material was locally available. There would be no more Brazilian government interference to pull the rug from under the company, and me. After a few meetings I was hired and appointed assistant sales manager for all of Brazil. My immediate boss was to be Rick Dolan, an ex-Navy carrier pilot, a wonderful type, young and very smart. He recognized that I operate best when given goals but allowed great freedom of action. Results were what counted. A splendid working relationship developed. Together with Dolan and Freddie Smith, our advertising manager sitting across from my desk, sales campaigns were mapped out. Freddie, a Brazilian-born Britisher straight as an arrow and I, more expansive, made a good team. We were extremely successful. Sales of Swift products rose almost fourfold, and the GMO, the general manager's office, took notice. Rick Dolan encouraged me to get started on Market Research, then in its infancy. I knew nothing about it. Through the Chicago main office, we ordered some books from Dartnell and other sources, which took some weeks to study.

Rick was right. Market research projects became the mainstay of our sales strategy. Even conservative Freddie Smith was enthusiastic as he realized that research could give a vastly more productive direction to his advertising budget. Our three-man cooperation reached new heights. It also brought subtle and not so subtle problems. The company was conservative, and long-established habits, opinions, and as-

sumptions got shaken up by research. Several older department heads felt threatened by this young upstart, a locally hired hand, not even sent from Chicago head offices. I earned myself a nickname, Hotshot Harry. It was coined by Cy Wrynn, the Canadian head of Oil Mill and Refinery, whose salad and cooking oils, long lingering, had taken off the sales chart. The oil sales contests Freddie and I organized among the major cities' sales branches exceeded all expectations. Cy cried "Uncle, stop sales!" We'd run out of raw materials. Rick got accolades, Freddie and I got some attention from the president's office.

Rick, and perhaps the GMO, assigned me to conduct a market research project indirectly designed to measure performance of other Swift production departments, all autonomous, as applied to national sales and profitability. After several weeks' work in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, I finally closeted myself off to write my tentative report, and as the facts and data got onto paper and took shape, I became apprehensive. If the report were released as I evaluated the findings, it would make several departments, run by long-term Swift managers I saw every day, look not so good. I submitted a draft to Rick, and after several uneasy days Rick and I had a private meeting in the smoke-filled conference room. He agreed with my apprehensions. As my boss he had to assume responsibility for my work. He was hesitant to release my findings. It would tread on many toes. Would I rewrite it? Tone it down? No! He decided to postpone the matter.

I was most uncomfortable with this. Pondering what next, I enlisted the advice of Father as an outsider. He had never failed me. He asked a lot of pointed questions, just as Rick did. He understood the implications only too well, even though he had never been a corporate animal. He analyzed the risks of garnering myself considerable enmity and ultimately left the decision as to whether I should publish or not to my conscience, my principles. He and I knew it was a tough call, it could jeopardize my career at Swift, which I was very happy with otherwise.

Freddie Smith was supportive. Rick still ambiguous. Quietly, I had the report draft re-typed clean and, without Rick's approval (to relieve him of responsibility), submitted it personally to Gus Hall, the president of Swift Brazil. Of course he knew of me, we had a nodding ac-

quaintance. But I had committed a corporate sin: I had broken the chain of command. Hall, a very tall, quiet, gray-haired man, took the report, we talked about it briefly and about Rick's and my apprehensions concerning it. He leafed through the pages, asked some pointed questions and returned the folder with the taciturn remark "Release it." I left his office with a sinking feeling of having shot myself in the foot. And maybe Rick, whom I liked so much, as well.

Copies were distributed to all department heads. Days of silence. Rick said very little, at least he didn't take me to task for having seen the president alone. I felt ostracized. Several days later I saw Marvin Gibson, vice president, saunter out of the GMO's office with my report under his arm. I recognized the cover. Without looking at me, Gibson stopped at Rick's, lightly tossed the fat folder on his desk, and loudly, for all to hear, barked out "Release this and have this man expand this project to the entire country and report back to me."

My career at Swift was made that day. It lasted several years and created a splendid working atmosphere. Later I ran into monetary problems. Brazil's inflation by then could be called galloping. Since I was locally hired, my salary was fixed in local currency. By contrast, all our Chicago-hired American colleagues were paid in dollars and received as well a fully paid vacation back home every two years. Their dollars, strong in the inflation, bought ever more cruzeiros, while my income slowly became worthless. Recognition of my performance for Swift notwithstanding, when I put out feelers about a salary increase, at least to keep pace with inflation, was told it was "under consideration." The same Marvin Gibson who barely a year later "enlisted" me as his private assistant outside office hours for a major YMCA fund drive he headed, justified salary policy with the remark that "meat packers make their money not by profits but by saving pennies." I never forgot that. I also found later, to my dismay, that this philosophy applied to corporations in general. No need to be a meat packer.

We boys led pretty active lives. We worked hard, but weekends were often pleasurably spent with Arnold Stolarski at his cozy lake cottage by the vast Santo Amaro reservoir. Robbie bought a small sailboat, I had a Jaguar. We formed a cooperative. My car was our

transportation to the faraway reservoir, his boat was for our sailing fun. We got along famously.

Freddie and Hilde by now had a baby girl, Susan. A charming, exceptionally captivating child. Papi and Mutti's first grandchild got lots of attention, and kept Hilde and Freddie very busy.

And I had an American girlfriend, Selma, from Boston, visiting her parents on assignment in São Paulo during school vacations. She was stunning. I saw a great deal of her, and got along very well with her parents. I could see myself getting serious about her—if our relationship could last through her upcoming four years of Smith College. A long shot but worth trying, I thought. So did her mother. Any strivings to have Selma meet my parents casually, got surreptitiously torpedoed by Mother, to the point where I was being embarrassed. By the time I brought this up with Papi he, unaware of my efforts, was not amused and called Mutti on the carpet. Too late anyway. Selma was flying home, her parents and I took her to Rio where we spent a few happy days together before she boarded her Pan American clipper. Our relationship did not survive her first year at Smith. She had become impressed with her own importance, with being at Smith, with the mostly wealthy society classmates she tried to keep up with, and her very rich Brazilian boyfriend, son of São Paulo's largest Ford dealer, who pursued her. But she really wanted to marry Leonard Bernstein! My one visit to Northampton, Massachusetts, was enough.

Months later, Robbie accepted an invitation to visit Uncles Sigi and Poldi in Buenos Aires. No doubt "quite casually," he was introduced to a local young woman, friend of the family there. Shortly after his return home, the young lady in question came to São Paulo for a visit. Maja Konstantin, born in Vienna, a sporty, attractive girl from a good family, made a fine impression. Even Mother, always critical, was happy. Maja returned home, and correspondence ensued. Something was brewing. An engagement. A wedding date in Buenos Aires was set. Papi and Mutti, to attend, boarded an American Delta Line passenger ship in Rio for the three day trip. Their first "full" exposure to an American atmosphere. Their wry observations of shipboard life among Americans were priceless, regale us upon their return. To father, colored by his long movie house exposure, Tom & Jerry were a

cartoon cat and mouse. Aboard the Delta Liner, it was a hot sweetened rum drink. Robbie and Maja, after honeymooning in Bariloche, the breathtaking Argentine Andean lake region, returned to São Paulo and set up housekeeping in their new apartment, which Robbie had carefully selected and furnished, with me along to kibitz, before leaving. Once again he was a happy trooper. Maja quickly adjusted to her new family although I was sure we must have been bewildering to her, just by sheer numbers alone.

With entrepreneurship never far from my mind, I began to explore something that impressed me in the United States: the flourishing paper matchbook advertising culture. Brazil sold its wooden matches, one box with every pack of cigarettes, and the two local match industries, Beija-Flor and Fiat-Lux, were a monopoly. By now my circle of friends included an Englishman who was general manager of Brazil's largest cigarette firm, Cia. Souza Cruz, whose brands included the best sellers Continental and Hollywood. One evening over scotch and soda at his home I spoke of what I saw as the huge potential of free, give-away matches with advertising. And that I would like to launch it. He rose to my argument and assured me, should I be able to get this off the ground, his company alone, Souza Cruz, would order millions of matchbooks. He went so far as to suggest the possible bankrolling of such an undertaking by either his Souza Cruz or his parent company, British-American Tobacco Company. Food for thought.

Another conversation like it with friends from the Coca Cola Rio office were similarly encouraging. I launched myself into studying the match business and examined the many souvenir matchbooks I had brought back from my U.S. visit. The Diamond Match Co. was the name on most of them and thus the source of the required machinery and technology. Getting up enough courage to speak with them, I called them in New York, and disappointingly found them less than forthcoming to my inquiry, which ostensibly might have led to a very substantial export sale of their machinery. I was asked to write them in detail, which I promptly did. In the meanwhile, I discreetly inquired with a goodly number of large hotels and fine restaurants in São Paulo and Rio as to their reaction. All, without exception, were very supportive and assured me of potentially large orders.

The Diamond Match people never answered, not even an acknowledgment. Subsequent phone inquiries to New York, very expensive in those days, were equally frustrating and unproductive. I was unable to penetrate their wall of silence, the only source of paper-match manufacturing technology I was able to uncover from this long distance. Consulting the few available copies of Dun & Bradstreet and a similar, huge compendium of U.S. industry produced no alternatives. The project died on the desks of Diamond Match Company to my total mystification. I was not yet mature enough to deal aggressively with such powerful corporations, not even if I could have afforded the trip to New York, in person. Advertising matches became available everywhere in Brazil some eight years later, very profitably marketed by Fiat Lux.

In 1950, Father began to ail. Nothing obvious on the surface, but he was not well. Physicians were consulted. Our own family doctor, Geraldo Sternfeld, in whose competence and compassion we all placed great faith, could not diagnose anything more serious than elevated blood pressure. It was suggested that we call in a specialist, and that produced Dr. Petraglia, then foremost doctor of internal medicine in the city. In his examination of our Papi, he was satisfied with the first diagnosis, high blood pressure. Needs to be brought down and controlled. The poor man was put on a strict salt-free diet, which he of course hated. With the best of intentions, Mother followed doctor's orders, and Papi was not only not feeling well but now became miserable. Lousy food and no more Chesterfields. He did like good food, and this diet did not sit well with him. And he had smoked all his adult life. He tried hard to make the best of it but he loathed it all. Worse yet, no evidence of improvement. He began to show urological problems. More physicians. No answers. Blood pressure was still considered the cause of his discomfort, now getting worse. Petraglia wanted him in a hospital for further testing.

On one of my frequent business trip to Rio some weeks earlier, I had discussed Father's condition one evening with a good personal friend who also happened to be a urologist. Gene scratched his chin, asked about symptoms and a few questions that seemed to center on whether father's kidneys had ever been looked at, while exchanging glances with his American wife, a one-time nurse. On the flight home

I was uneasy about Gene's questions. Why had no one ever looked at the possibility of kidney complications. Now that father was in a hospital for observation, I consulted with Mother and the boys. We decided to call on Gene in Rio. He dropped everything. Three hours later he was at the hospital having a conference with Father's physicians. He ordered some tests, examined Papi, who only knew that Gene, of whom I had often spoken, "happened to be in town." A few hours later he reluctantly told us. Acute, progressive kidney failure. Prognosis: eventual uremia. Terminal.

We brought Papi back home, decided not to tell him, and made his life as comfortable as possible. We could do no more. His awful diet, obviously of no importance whatsoever, was thrown out. He was so pleased, he never noticed the "why." So were his fancy specialist physicians, except for family friend and physician Geraldo Sternfeld. His elevated blood pressure was something he could have lived another twenty years with. Not renal failure. In the spring of 1951, on March 12, after an acute crisis Father died of uremia at home in a mercifully brief agony. He was a young fifty-five.

Mutti was inconsolable. It had been a good marriage, they were very attuned to each other, had gone through a lot together, and she mourned his passing from the depth of her heart. She felt abandoned. She concentrated her entire being on her grief and on her children. We were there for her, and I, still single living at home, was there almost twenty-four hours of every day. She demanded our undivided attention, devotion, sympathy, every hour of every day, and she received it. Peculiarly, she felt the loss of Papi as being hers alone. In her mind it was not ours as well. How wrong she was. We have mourned his passing a thousand times over the years. It was a most difficult time.

Throughout Papi's lengthy illness, I witnessed one of the more bizarre experiences of my business career. My reputation at Swift was apparently known outside the company. One evening in 1951, while in Rio de Janeiro on Swift business I received a phone call in my hotel. Anonymous. A man's well-spoken voice offered me a position with some major U.S. corporation headquartered in Rio de Janeiro if I were willing to make a change. I threatened to hang up instantly unless the caller identified himself, and instead he made a dinner appointment

with me for next evening to meet and talk. He knew me, that would be enough.

Intrigued, I kept the appointment. The man turned out to be number three with Brazil's IBM World Trade, its director of sales, about to leave his position, which he now was authorized to offer me. They had heard of me, apparently did some checking. Peculiarly, I had dated the daughter of his lady friend in São Paulo where we had met briefly. My curiosity grew after I realized this was a bona fide offer, accompanied by a financial arrangement that exceeded my wildest expectations. This dinner led to a meeting with the president of IBM World Trade, Brazil, Raymond Giroux, a charming Frenchman, who confirmed the offer, apologized for the unorthodox handling of the matter and explained the position in very general terms. I vaguely sensed that there were things at play that would not be explained until later. His major concern seemed to be whether I was interested in the position and when I could start? I needed time to think. It was during the period when Father was quite ill. Passing my position at Swift to a new man was a serious consideration, that would take some time. He agreed, that after all, it was not urgent to fill the position immediately.

After Father's death I must confess that life with Mother became increasingly difficult. We boys too had to come to terms with losing this wonderful man. At least Freddie and Robbie, married, had their wives and own homes to go to every evening. I was there to hold Mother's hand night after night, month after month. She allowed herself to become so demandingly dependent on us that I had no life of my own. She barely tolerated my going to the office in the morning. I felt that if she was ever to stand on her own two feet again—and she was too young not to, only fifty-three—she needed to be on her own, deal with problems no matter how painful. IBM's offer began to look better every day. My negotiations with Swift for a more adequate salary, never mind approaching even remotely the more than generous numbers offered by IBM, were fruitless. I communicated my acceptance to IBM and reluctantly resigned from Swift.

Three months later, my boxer puppy Diana and I moved to Rio in my Jaguar, temporarily quartered in my usual hotel, the Regente on Copacabana Beach. Bringing Mother gently around to accepting this was not easy. I resorted to a white lie about a Swift transfer which she

could grudgingly understand. A new job in a different company, that she would not.

By the time I reported to my new office, the ballgame had changed drastically. Raymond Giroux had been transferred to Ireland. I was introduced to the new president, Charles Campbell, who explained certain new conditions at IBM Brazil. Everything was altogether different, thanks to politics. My position was to be kept a secret from the other staff. Temporarily, mind you. I had to be patient. The only thing that did not change was the generous salary arrangement. But otherwise, my working atmosphere was to became a nightmare I could not have imagined had I tried.

I lived superbly in Rio. Had my own apartment for the first time in my life, one block away from Copacabana Beach, a full-time live-in maid who, formerly with the French embassy, was an excellent gourmet cook. Diana the boxer puppy was well taken care of, I was earning very good money, was twenty-four and single, and girls in Rio were plentiful. I had quite a group of ready made friends from my years of frequent business travel to Rio. I had it made.

Then I received a surprising phone call from Mutti in São Paulo. I called her at least once a week, but this one she initiated. She had the opportunity to come to Rio with a friend, would it be all right if she visited and spent a few days in Rio with me? Of course, I immediately encouraged her as I could feel she was ready to get out of her self-imposed hermitlike existence, full of self pity, and face the world once again. When she came a few days later, it was just as I had surmised. She was open to meet old friends again from the time when she had traveled to Rio in past years with Papi. We had a very good time together. She was a different Mutti from the one I had left in São Paulo some months ago. She would recover.

Regrettably, my work load was very light. IBM put my position in the company on the back burner for reasons of external and internal corporate politics and I hated it. This incidentally was the time when Thomas Watson, Sr., the founder of IBM, was still active and came on a "state visit" to Rio once. Of course I had occasion to be involved in his comings and goings. What an autocratic old despot he was. He just loved to make his executives tremble with fear in his presence. His

visit was brief, but not his retinue of sycophants, who did his every bidding. I think most of us were very glad when he left us, to continue his trip. But his imprint was on everything in IBM. Paternalism. Dark blue suits and white shirts only, please. And discreet ties. And of course no alcohol, not at company affairs, not in the privacy of your home, not in your nonworking leisure activities. Not that I am a drinker, other than very occasionally. But I hated to have any organization prescribe my mode of conduct. My parents had done, I thought, a rather good job at that.

My unhappiness with my work at IBM grew. Every week was another waste of time. And no changes in sight despite my entreaties to Mr. Campbell. The real reasons for IBM's problems in Brazil were anchored in a very long, distasteful and politically explosive history of deceit, massive embezzlement, and criminal fraud by one of Rio's most influential politicians. And IBM was the victim, with little legal recourse against such an individual in that system. While my personal life was very good, I could not tolerate my work situation any longer. I decided to leave IBM and come to the United States, where I would resign officially while ostensibly on leave. In that great city of New York there would be one good position waiting for me as a well experienced marketing executive for Brazil. I was supremely confident that in a year's time I would be back putting my know-how to work on behalf of some other corporation, but as a U.S. employee, paid in dollars. I did not want to deal with the country's economic vagaries and inflation ever again.

I discussed my thoughts with some close friends in similar positions, who felt it was worth a good try. My brothers agreed as well, while we discussed the implications for Mother, and earnestly hoped she would continue to get back on her own two feet again.

I fully intended to be back in São Paulo in perhaps a year, giving me time to locate a suitable position in New York and get past the usual training period that large American corporations insisted on. It sounded so logical, so easy.

On September 7, 1952, I boarded an Aerovias Brazil airliner for Miami, leaving my family, friends and previous life behind to start a new one in the United States.

It was to turn out quite different from what I had anticipated.

Epilogue

50 Years Later

The cost of war is always the last thing the combatants devote any time to. They tend to worry about it later, expecting, of course, to be the winner, thus obtaining absolution from their own people for the loss of life, suffering and treasure invested in achieving their triumph. All with great pomp and circumstance.

But where there are winners, there must also be losers. Within the framework of World War II, while the allies were ultimately victorious, as the alternative was clearly impossible to countenance for the democracies, all participants experienced immeasurable pain and grief. The destruction wrought, the loss of life sustained, the treasure expended, were staggering for all involved.

Altogether, the loss of life during World War II reached 60 million. A number of absolutely unprecedented magnitude. This was the first war in which civilian casualties exceeded military ones by two thirds. There is no quantifiable price tag that can be attached to pain, suffering and anguish endured by the combatants and civilian populations, nor to the displacement of well over 10 million in Europe alone, turned into refugees due to shifting borders as a result of territorial occupation and new political alignments.

And why? Because one single, solitary individual was possessed by an idea, anchored in deep, ultra-right nationalism, to launch his country and its people on a war of world-wide conquest. And in the same process, launch the genocide of an entire people his paranoia and self-induced hatred declared as "unworthy of life."

Two essential conditions had to be met to turn this madness into reality.

On the one hand, a posture vis-à-vis Germany's neighbors and old enemies of 1914, to persuade them that his actions were far from his

real intentions. In this, Adolf Hitler succeeded eminently. Because his potential adversaries, militarily more powerful particularly in the early stages of his rise to power, and whose lack of political resolve he judged accurately, meekly averted their eyes every time he rattled his saber. What was worse, many among them admired him.

On the other, to manipulate his own people, without whose support his adventures would never get off the ground. And this he accomplished cleverly. At first very careful, the Nazi regime, by now developing into a full-fledged police state, brazenly applied his favorite tactic, the "Big Lie." Dealing with a disillusioned nation battling a deep economic depression, he reinforced their fears and played on their confusion, caused by years of political instability largely fomented by his own political maneuvers.

A spellbinding orator, who instinctively knew how to harangue, he found more than willing ears. To the downtrodden, he provided that which they had not had in years: work, food for their families, security, an end to chaos.

To the upper-class, the industrialists and bankers, he held out the prospect of renewed industrialization to spur the economy. And to the military officer corps, a rearmament program that would give them a real military establishment. A dream come true for Germany. How could they miss with this man?

Parallel to this ambitious program, he found it convenient to provide a scapegoat the nation could focus on, one that he portrayed as responsible for all the ills that beset them. It would take their minds off their own problems and direct their attention on a small but visible minority he had intended to eradicate from early on. Six million European Jews were to be exterminated by the Nazi regime.

The nation did not object, as he set out to turn his virulent brand of anti-Semitism into deadly terror. In short order, the German people became compliant, subservient, obedient to do his every bidding. In the process, they failed totally to become aware that they were being manipulated.

The Big Lie Hitler applied so efficiently all along was, of course, also turned on his own people. In the euphoria over Germany's easy conquests in Europe in the 30s, they allowed themselves to be bitterly deceived. All they saw was an ever growing, ever more influential

Germany, smartly marching military displays, splendid uniforms on parade everywhere, swastika flags from every window. And heard rousing speeches to which they responded enthusiastically with the Nazi salute.

They failed to reflect that all that military might was not merely meant for showy parades. It had to lead to something sinister. As it soon did. Few things surprised the Germans more than the outbreak of hostilities on September 1, 1939. Accustomed as they had become to facile, bloodless takeovers, their reaction to the invasion of Poland was subdued, reserved, somber.

But victory after victory followed, and they could not get enough of it. Even arch-enemy France, who could not be subdued in 1914–1918, was smashed in a matter of weeks. In the face of such brilliant accomplishments, who could mind that, quietly behind the scenes, a massive program of euthanasia had been in progress, in which the mentally sick, the handicapped, the social undesirables, even incurably ill and old veterans of World War I were being eliminated by state fiat. That *KZ* were being established right and left, to hold opponents behind barbed wire. That the Jews of Germany, quite openly, were persecuted, insulted, deprived of their civil rights, beaten, deported, until they disappeared from view.

Had one not applauded the ugly boycott of 1933? The insidious racial laws promulgated in 1935? The brutal *Polenaktion* of 1983? And finally, that orgy of destruction, *Kristallnacht*, on November 9, 1938? And profited from it? Yes, one had. They had not only been witnesses. They were accomplices.

Even the assault on the U.S.S.R., that "threat to European culture" that Hitler told them had to be conquered, wiped out, to make *Lebenstraum* for Germans, was greeted with support. Whether there was widespread knowledge of the terror perpetrated in their name in the conquered territories, the mass slaughter of civilians, the establishment in the conquered East of extermination camps engineered to kill millions by gas, the merciless starvation to death of Soviet soldiers, prisoners of war, is conjecture. But the extent of it all was so massive, so enormous, took so many to accomplish, that it was impossible to keep under wraps altogether. It did filter out. Into Germany, and to the world.

So they knew. Protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. It was too late. The earlier victories turned into retreats, followed by defeat after bitter defeat. And all the while Allied bomber formations numbering hundreds, often a thousand or more, coming over by night and by day, laying entire cities to waste. "Overlord," the Allied invasion on June 6, 1944 at Normandy they were told would never succeed, did so spectacularly. It was the beginning of the end.

Unfortunately, that handful of Germans with a conscience, and there were those too, failed in their attempt to do away with the dictator on July 20, 1944. Almost exactly eleven months after "Overlord" began on the beaches, the German nation had been beaten into the worst defeat in its history, and capitulated. Many in the top party leadership tried to abandon the ship like so many rats that they were.

In the end, Adolf Hitler who started it all and kept it going without any regard for his own people, even after it was hopeless to continue the fight, chose to exit center stage and shot himself.

And left the nation he had so miserably misled and deceived to deal with the consequences. They had allowed the Nazi's permanent appeal to their inner *Schweinhund* to succeed. They allowed themselves to be used, and paid a heavy price. A bitter lesson, Germany. A bitter lesson, world.

So we close this book with the same words it opened:

THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING.

AL	Arbeitslager	Work camp
BA	Bundesarchiv Koblenz	German Federal Archives, Koblenz
BA/MA	Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv (Freiburg)	Military Archives branch of the BA, Freiburg
BDM	Bund Deutscher Mädchen	German Girl's League
DRB	Deutsche Reichsbahn	German railroads
DULAG	Durchgangslager	Transitional camp for POWs
GESTAPO	Geheime Staatspolizei	Secret State Police
HBF	Hauptbahnhof	Main railroad station
HJ	Hitler Jugend	Hitler Youth
KAPO	origin uncertain; possibly Ka(Z)POlizei	KZ police, inmates in charge of fellow inmates
KZ	Konzentrationslager	Concentration camp
LA	Lagerältester	Camp elder
MAQUIS		French underground
NSDAP	Nat'l Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei	Nat'l Socialist German Workers Party
NSV	N.S. Volkswohlfahrt	N.S. People's Welfare Organization
OKH	Oberkommando Heer	High Command Ground Forces
OKL	Oberkommando Luftwaffe	High Command Air Force
OKM	Oberkommando Marine	High Command Navy
OKW	Oberkommando Wehrmacht	Supreme Command, Armed Forces
RAD	Reichsarbeitsdienst	Labor Service
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt	Main State Security Office
SA	Sturmabteilung	Storm troopers (NSDAP Brown shirts)
SCHUPO	Schutzpolizei	Civilian police
SD	Sicherheitsdienst	SS Security Service
SHAEF		Supreme HQ Allied Expeditionary Forces
SS	Schutzstaffel	Führer bodyguard/Security troops (Death head insignia)
STALAG	Stationslager	Permanent POW camp
VL	Vernichtungslager	Extermination camp
WAFFEN SS		SS Military units (separate from Wehrmacht)
WHW	Winterhilfswerk	A social service for the needy in winter
	Einsatzkommando	SS Special Liquidation Group
	Untermenschen	Subhumans
	Jungvolk	Pre-teen HJ
	Abwehr	Military counter espionage
	Panzer	Tank, any armored vehicle
	SS Gruppenführer	SS Lt. General
	Gauleiter	NSDAP official of high rank, district leader

Born in Leipzig, Germany, Harry Conway spent the first twelve years of his life growing up in what was to become Nazi Germany. The events swirling around his family led him to a multi-national education—Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Brazil. He auditioned post graduate MBA courses at Harvard where, years later he was invited to lecture. In New York since 1952, and watching the U.N. at work, his imagination and talent for languages was aroused, and he ultimately shared the invention of wireless simultaneous interpretation technology which allowed the world to hold international multi-lingual meetings outside of the U.N. Having created an entirely new industry, he established a unique technical corporation that conducted international conferences and congresses for 36 years. Traveling extensively world-wide, he came in direct contact with high-level decision makers in the political, military and economic arena since the 50s, observing the often questionable decision-making processes as they took shape. He is working on another book about that.

An avid blue water sailor and a prolific writer, he authored many articles, on his profession, on history, travel, politics. Recently tapped for the task of editor of an important weekly in New York, he choose to forego the opportunity and rather give time and effort to the completion of his writing. Retired, he now lives with his wife in a small college town in Vermont.

Front Cover: **BERLIN, 1945—THE FACE OF DEFEAT.** This dejected German soldier before the ruins of the Reichstag symbolizes the despair of a misused nation.

Rear Cover: **Munich**, 1945. Endless columns of Wehrmacht soldi down an Autobahn into American captivity, rded by a Jeep and three GIs.

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GERMANS WHEN LIES WERE DECRE

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